

Visit your local pharmacy first for seven minor conditions

From 31st January people across West Sussex can pop down to their local pharmacy for help with seven minor conditions which would previously have required a GP appointment.

Earlier this year 75% of people said they wanted to see pharmacies offering more healthcare services such as treating urinary tract infections or sore throats, and now they will be. Almost all pharmacies will offer the new service, giving advice and, if needed, NHS medicines, to treat seven common health conditions – and all without needing to get a GP appointment.

As experts in medicines and managing minor illnesses, pharmacists have been backed by Government and the NHS to provide a new NHS 'Pharmacy First' service. 4 pharmacies across our area have signed up to support people in certain age groups seeking help for sore throats, earache in children, sinusitis, infected insect bites, impetigo, shingles, and urinary tract infections in women.

If you have symptoms that suggest you may have one of these conditions, you can now walk into a pharmacy and be offered a consultation with the pharmacist. Under the new service pharmacists can provide advice and, if clinically necessary, will offer an NHS medicine to treat it (NHS prescription charge apply if you normally pay for medicines supplied on prescription). Should the pharmacy team be unable to help, you will be directed to your GP surgery or A&E as appropriate.

By thinking 'Pharmacy First', people will find it easier and quicker to get the help they need and bypass the 8am rush to book an appointment with their GP. The new service is part of a wider expansion of healthcare services that will empower pharmacists to use more of their skills and give people more choice about their healthcare. It is also hoped that the service will be expanded to include more conditions in the future.

Find the new service at a pharmacy near you using the NHS website: [https://
www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/prescriptions-and-pharmacies/](https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/prescriptions-and-pharmacies/)

Notes and further detail for editors

About community pharmacy

- Community pharmacies play a vital role in society, providing access to medicines, healthcare advice and a range of other health services.
- Around 1.6 million people visit the c.10,700 pharmacies in England every day.
- Community pharmacies are situated in high street locations, in neighbourhood centres, in supermarkets and in the heart of the most deprived communities. Many are open long hours when other health care professionals are unavailable.
- There are several different types and sizes of community pharmacies, ranging from the large chains with shops on every High Street or in edge of town supermarkets, to small individually owned pharmacies in small communities, in the suburbs and often in deprived areas or rural settings.
- Community pharmacists are experts in medicines and managing minor conditions.
- In recent years community pharmacists have been developing their skills in clinical services in addition to their traditional dispensing role to allow better integration and team working with the rest of the NHS.
- 75% of people agree that they would like to see community pharmacies offering more healthcare services such as treating urinary tract infections or sore throats ([YouGov poll for Community Pharmacy England](#))

About the service

- The Pharmacy First service enables members of the public to visit pharmacies, as a first port of call, for help with a range of common minor conditions.
- The service enables pharmacists to offer advice to patients and supply NHS medicines (including antibiotics), where clinically appropriate, for:
 1. Sinusitis – for children and adults aged 12 years and over;
 2. Sore throat – for children and adults aged 5 years and over;
 3. Earache (Acute otitis media) – for children aged 1 to 17 years;
 4. Infected insect bite – for children and adults aged 1 year and over;
 5. Impetigo – for children and adults aged 1 year and over;
 6. Shingles – for adults aged 18 years and over; and
 7. Uncomplicated urinary tract infections in women aged 16 to 64 years.

It is hoped that the service will be expanded to include more conditions in the future.

- In the consultations with a pharmacist, people with symptoms suggestive of the seven conditions will be provided with advice and be supplied, where clinically necessary, with a prescription-only treatment under a Patient Group Direction (PGD) or a pharmacy only medicine.
- If the pharmacy team cannot help with the condition the patient is presenting with, they will be referred to the appropriate healthcare access point, such as a GP surgery or A&E.
- In addition to this, patients can continue to be able to access emergency prescription medicines or consultations on other minor conditions where they have been referred to the pharmacy by NHS 111, their GP surgery or other settings.
- The Pharmacy First service launches on 31st January 2024, but as it is an optional service so not all pharmacies will offer it. The NHS.uk website is adding a service finder to help people locate which pharmacies are providing it near them: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/prescriptions-and-pharmacies/>
- The NHS will shortly launch a national patient information campaign to increase awareness of the service.