

Position statement on the prescribing of antihistamines and nasal sprays for mild to moderate hay fever and allergic rhinitis on prescription

In line with NHS England's guidance on conditions for which over the counter items should not be routinely prescribed, LSCMMG do not support the prescribing of antihistamines and nasal sprays for mild to moderate hay fever or allergic rhinitis.

Rationale

- Hay fever and other allergic symptoms can be managed by avoiding triggers
- If treatment is needed for mild to moderate hay fever, a wide range of medications can be purchased from community pharmacies and supermarkets. These medications are usually less expensive than a prescription and can be purchased without seeing a GP.¹

Guidance and recommendations for clinicians

Advise patients about safe and effective self-care measures. You may wish to provide the patient with a patient information leaflet to promote education about self-limiting conditions.

Advise patients to seek medical advice in the following circumstances:

- If experiencing wheezing, breathlessness or tightness in their chest.
- If pregnant or breastfeeding.
- The pattern of symptoms seems unusual or diagnosis is uncertain.
- An OTC corticosteroid nasal spray has been used for longer than 3 months.

References

1. PrescQIPP B84 Antihistamines and hayfever
<https://www.prescqipp.info/resources/category/143-self-care-hayfever>
2. NICE Clinical Knowledge Summaries Allergic Rhinitis (accessed 23/2/17)
<https://cks.nice.org.uk/allergic-rhinitis>
3. Beconase Hayfever patient information leaflet (accessed 23/2/17)
<http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/medicine/26797>
4. PrescQipp Self Care webkit <https://www.prescqipp.info/resources/category/141-self-care-webkit>

Further information is available:

NHS England. Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-ccgs/>