

'Think pharmacy first' for common health conditions this winter

People are being encouraged to 'think pharmacy first' this winter for fast advice and treatment for a range of common conditions.

Health teams across the North East and North Cumbria are urging people, with minor health concerns, to get faster 'walk-in' care at their local community pharmacy – instead of making an appointment with their GP practice.

Ewan Maule, director of medicines, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) said: "Many people often go to their GP, or local hospital, for things that could easily be sorted much more quickly and easily by visiting their local pharmacy first instead.

"Pharmacists are highly trained health experts who can provide a wide range of advice on the best ways to treat many common conditions like coughs, colds, sore throats, upset stomachs and general aches and pains.

"It's also important to remember that you don't need an appointment to see a pharmacist - you can just 'walk-in' so it really is much more convenient for many people, especially parents with young children, to get the care they need quickly – and if you need further help your pharmacist can signpost you to the right NHS services for your needs."

Under the common conditions scheme, community pharmacists can offer help and advice on:

- Aches and pains - back pain, headache, period pain, teething
- Allergies - bites and stings, hay fever, skin reaction
- Colds and flu – cough, congestion, sore throat, fever / temperature (including fever following immunisation)
- Ear care – earache, ear infection, ear wax
- Eye care - bacterial conjunctivitis, styes
- Gastrointestinal care – diarrhoea, constipation, indigestion, haemorrhoids (piles)
- Head lice
- Mouth care - cold sores, oral thrush, ulcers
- Skin care - athlete's foot, contact dermatitis / atopic eczema, nappy rash, warts, and verrucae.
- Vaginal thrush

This is in addition to a wide range of other conditions that can be treated with medication available from your local pharmacist.

Treatment under the common conditions scheme is fast, convenient, and any medication prescribed will be free of charge for people who don't normally pay for their prescriptions, or charged at the usual NHS prescription rate for those who do.

"We want to ensure that everyone gets the best care possible," added Mr Maul.

"Anyone with a serious concern about their health should still seek advice from their doctor but for people with less serious, or non-urgent health problems, going to a GP or hospital may not be the right place for the care they need - being seen quickly by a local pharmacist can get them the right care, in the right place to help them feel better faster."

Many local community pharmacies across the North East and North Cumbria also offer advice and treatment for women, aged 16-64, with uncomplicated urinary tract infections, free blood pressure checks for over 40s and flu and COVID-19 immunisations.

More information on the common conditions service is available at:

<https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/here-to-help-campaigns/common-conditions/>

Ends