

A closer look at the NHS Pharmacy First service

The NHS Pharmacy First service allows patients to access consultations and advice for seven common conditions, and if appropriate, obtain prescription medication directly from their local pharmacy without needing a GP appointment. The service, which launched in January 2024, operates across England and is expected to create capacity in General Practice for patients who need it most, as well as giving patients easy access to prompt treatment closer to home. It builds on the success of similar Pharmacy First services already running in Scotland (since 2020) and Wales (since 2021).

The Pharmacy First service covers the following seven common conditions:

- Earache (for those aged one to 17)
- Impetigo (for those aged one and over)
- Infected insect bites (for those aged one and over)
- Shingles (for those aged 18 and over)
- Sinusitis (for those aged 12 and over)
- Sore throat (for those aged five and over)
- Uncomplicated urinary tract infections (for women aged 16–64)

What to expect?

Patients are offered a private consultation where a pharmacist will assess their symptoms and suggest the most appropriate treatment. If needed, the pharmacist can supply certain prescription medicines following the consultation, however in some cases it may be clinically appropriate to refer the patient to a GP or other healthcare setting, if further treatment or assessment is needed.

Who can use the service?

The service is available to all patients that fall within the ailments and age brackets listed above. Patients can walk-in to participating pharmacies to access this service, or may be referred by NHS 111 or their GP practice.



NHS
Providing NHS services

Most pharmacies can help you
with **seven common conditions**
without needing a GP appointment

- **Sinusitis**
(adults and children aged 12 years and over)
- **Sore throat**
(adults and children aged 5 years and over)
- **Earache**
(children and young adults aged 1 year to 17 years)
- **Infected insect bite**
(adults and children aged 1 year and over)
- **Impetigo**
(adults and children aged 1 year and over)
- **Shingles**
(adults aged 18 years and over)
- **Urinary tract infection**
(women, aged 16 to 64 years)

Ask your pharmacy for more
information about this
free* NHS service

**Visit your
Pharmacy First!**

*NHS prescription charge rules apply where a medicine is supplied

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Is my pharmacist trained to assess my condition?

Pharmacists are highly trained healthcare professionals who study for five years to be experts in medicines and minor ailments. Pharmacists in England have been offered optional additional training to support the service, specifically for assessments of conditions such as ear, nose, and throat issues.

Will I have to wait?

Around 1.6 million people walk into community pharmacies across England every day, so pharmacists are used to dealing with a range of conditions, spotting signs of a more serious condition and supporting their communities to stay well. This high level of footfall can make a day in the life of a pharmacist unpredictable at times, and they cannot always plan for what may come up.

Patience may be required, as this is a pharmacist only-led service. Patients may need to wait for the pharmacist or a consultation room to become available. Alternatively, patients may be asked to return to the pharmacy at a more convenient time of the day.

Do I have to pay for the service?

The consultation is free. However, if an NHS prescription medicine is issued, patients would need to pay the prescription cost if they are not exempt from prescription charges.

The pharmacist may also suggest patients seek over-the-counter alternatives as opposed to a prescription medication. In such cases it is up to patients to decide if they wish to make such purchases.

What to do if I still feel unwell?

If the patient's symptoms persist or worsen after following the pharmacist's advice and treatment for a particular condition, they should return to the pharmacy, consult their GP surgery or call NHS 111.

Symptoms that persist or worsen may require further medical attention.

Current Availability:

Over 94% of pharmacies across the NHS Norfolk & Waveney and NHS Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board areas now offer the NHS Pharmacy First service and have provided thousands of convenient consultations since its launch.

For more information please visit the NHS website to find out more and locate your nearest pharmacy:

