

The Common Ailments Service (CAS) should be considered as a first line option for patients who need NHS advice and treatment for a number of common ailments.

Patients who require advice relating to eye conditions should be referred to the Welsh Eye Care Service delivered by community optometrists (opticians) in the first instance.



Who can access the Common Ailments Service?

Any patient who is remaining in Wales for 24 hours after accessing the service is eligible to receive treatment through CAS.

For some conditions there are exclusions based on:

- age
- pregnancy/breastfeeding
- clinical presentation

These vary depending on the condition. A summary of the exclusion criteria can be found below under "Service information". If you are unsure whether to refer to a community pharmacy, please contact your local pharmacist for advice.



What conditions are covered?

Pharmacists can offer advice and/or treatment for 26 agreed conditions. These are:

- Acne vulgaris
- Allergic rhinitis
- Athlete's foot
- Chickenpox (in children under 14 years of age)
- Cold sores*
- Colic (infantile)
- Conjunctivitis (bacterial)
- Constipation
- Diarrhoea*
- Dry eye disease
- Dry skin including dermatitis and atopic eczema
- Dyspepsia
- Haemorrhoids
- Head lice
- Ingrowing toenail*
- Lower back pain (acute)
- Mouth ulcers (simple aphthous)
- Nappy rash
- Oral thrush
- Ringworm, tinea cruris and intertrigo
- Scabies
- Sore throat
- Teething
- Threadworms
- Vulvovaginal thrush
- Warts and verrucae

*there are no evidence-based NHS treatments available for these conditions. Pharmacists will provide advice on self-care and ongoing management of symptoms.



What about conditions not included (e.g. cough, cold)?

Patients suffering with other conditions will not be able to access the CAS. They may however receive advice from the pharmacist and the option to buy medicines over the counter (if suitable). If a pharmacist feels that the patient needs to be seen by the GP or another healthcare provider, they will refer appropriately.



Service Information

- Patients describing symptoms potentially indicative of a more serious condition should not be referred to the CAS.
- Patients who have recently consulted a GP or practice nurse for management of a common ailment that has not responded to treatment should be offered a GP appointment.
- The following list is NOT exhaustive; judgment should be used during triage/referral.



Service Information

	Condition	Consider referral to Common Ailments Service	Offer GP appointment
A	Acne vulgaris	Patients aged ≥ 12 years of age where no previous treatment has been tried	Patients with severe symptoms, infected acne or < 12 years of age.
	Allergic rhinitis	Patients ≥ 2 years of age	If fever, shortness of breath or infection present.
	Athlete's foot	Patients ≥ 1 month of age	Patients who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are immunocompromised • have signs of infection • are in significant pain • have poorly controlled diabetes
C	Chickenpox	Patients aged 2 months to < 14 years of age	Children who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are systemically unwell • are immunosuppressed • have a persistent/recurrent fever
	Cold sores	Babies ≥ 6 months old	Patients who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are pregnant • have frequent episodes (≥ 6 episodes/year) • have hoarseness • have persistent ulceration or patches in the mouth • have difficulty swallowing • are immunocompromised • have severe or secondary infection Or if the virus has infected the eye(s) or genitals



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	Condition	Consider referral to Common Ailments Service	Offer GP appointment
C	Colic (infantile)	All infant patients	<p>If an infant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is systemically unwell • is not thriving • has symptoms that are not improving <p>Or if parent/guardian feels unable to cope</p>
	Conjunctivitis (bacterial)	<p>Refer all to Welsh Eye Care Service if available.</p> <p>If not available offer referral to pharmacy to patients aged ≥ 1 month if no exclusion criteria present.</p>	<p>Refer all to Welsh Eye Care Service if available</p> <p>If not available, offer GP appointment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pregnant/breastfeeding women • patients with visual disturbance/pain • children < 1 month of age • patients with personal/family history of blood dyscrasias
	Constipation	Patients ≥ 18 years old	<p>If patients have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blood/mucus in stools • abdominal pain • unexplained weight loss • Crohn's disease/ulcerative colitis • a palliative care diagnosis • fever/nausea/vomiting • urinary symptoms
D	Diarrhoea	Patients ≥ 4 weeks of age and ≤ 65 years of age	<p>If patient is pregnant, immunocompromised or has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fever • severe abdominal pain • unexplained weight loss • diarrhoea that persists for > 7 days • history of foreign travel • history of recent antibiotic treatment



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	Condition	Consider referral to Common Ailments Service	Offer GP appointment
D	Dry eye disease	<p>Refer all to Welsh Eye Care Service if available. If not available refer all patients ≥ 18 years of age to pharmacy if no exclusion criteria present.</p>	<p>Refer all patients to Welsh Eye Care Service if available. If service unavailable consider need for immediate GP appointment if patient:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has visual disturbance/pain/flashing lights • has a headache • is vomiting • is a contact lens wearers • has systemic involvement e.g. weight loss/fever • has copious discharge coming from the eye(s) <p>Or patients with dry eye lasting >6 weeks</p>
	Dry skin	Patients ≥ 1 month of age	<p>Patients who have failed to respond to treatment or those with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • severe symptoms • symptoms of infection • symptoms affecting face, head and neck, underarms, groin or genitalia
	Dyspepsia	Patients ≥ 18 years of age	<p>Patients with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • weight loss • altered bowel habits • nausea • vomiting • newly diagnosed diabetes • signs of bleeding • a tender/swollen abdomen • pain on exertion • history of ulceration • new onset if >55 years old <p>Or if symptoms are not relieved by treatment</p>



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H	Haemorrhoids	Patients ≥ 18 years of age	<p>Patients who are pregnant or breastfeeding or those with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • moderate-severe pain • a change in bowel habits • heavy bleeding • recurrent symptoms • a non-response to treatment
	Head lice	Patients ≥ 6 months of age	<p>Patients with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scalp inflammation • signs of infection • infestation that persists despite treatment
I	Ingrowing toenail	All patients	<p>Patients with diabetes or if they have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concurrent infection/nail disease • nerve damage in feet • no improvement after 7 days conservative treatment
L	Lower back pain (acute)	Patients aged 18-50 years old	<p>Patients with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • severe, systemic or red flag symptoms • a history of cancer or back pain that is not lower back pain <p>Patients who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • immunocompromised (including those who have diabetes) • pregnant/breastfeeding



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M	Mouth ulcers (simple aphthous)	Patients aged >12 years	<p>Patients with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • painless ulcers • a solitary ulcer lasting ≥ 3 weeks • initial presentation if >30 years old • recurrent mouth ulcers • signs of infection/fever • immunosuppression • symptoms resulting in inability to eat or drink • worsening pain, redness, or bleeding • multiple or large lesions
N	Nappy rash	All infants	<p>Infants with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • systemic symptoms • symptoms of infection • severe redness or soreness • ulceration, plaques or nodules
O	Oral thrush	Patients ≥ 4 weeks of age	<p>Patients who are immunocompromised (including poorly controlled diabetes) or who are pregnant or breastfeeding.</p> <p>Patients who have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficulty/pain on swallowing extensive/severe infection • non-resolved symptoms after 7 days treatment
R	Ringworm, tinea cruris and intertrigo	Patients ≥ 1 month of age	<p>Patients with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recurrent symptoms or symptoms indicative of secondary infection • symptoms that haven't improved after using advised treatment



Service Information

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S	Scabies	Patients ≥ 2 years of age	Patients with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • severe rash • broken skin • secondary infection • systemic symptoms • crusted scabies • treatment failure
	Sore throat	All patients	Patients who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are systemically unwell • are immunocompromised • are dehydrated • have a rash, flushed cheeks or swollen tongue • have a high temperature • have a severe headache, nausea or vomiting • are at high risk of serious complications • don't have a cough • have persistent symptoms despite treatment
T	Teething	All infants	Infants who are systemically unwell e.g. fever, or who have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diarrhoea • prolonged or particularly distressing symptoms
	Threadworm	Patients ≥ 6 months of age	Patients who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are pregnant or breastfeeding if hygiene measures alone are ineffective or unacceptable • have frequent recurrences



Service Information

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V	Vulvovaginal candidiasis	Patients 16 years to ≤60 years of age	<p>Patients with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • abdominal pain • foul-smelling discharge • increased urinary frequency • abnormal vaginal bleeding • unresolved symptoms despite treatment • nausea, vomiting or fever <p>Patients who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • immunocompromised including those with poorly controlled diabetes
W	Warts and verrucae	Patients ≥2 years of age	<p>Patients who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • immunocompromised including those with diabetes <p>Patients with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poor circulation to hands or feet • hairy/bleeding warts or those that have changed appearance • multiple lesions or persistent symptoms • pain • symptoms of infection • red or irritated skin • warts on face, skin folds or anogenital regions • warts near birthmarks, moles or mucous membranes • open wounds



More information

For more information on an ailment, talk to the community pharmacist or look at the following websites:

NHS 111 Wales: <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/>

Patient UK: <https://patient.info/>

Medicines A-Z: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/>

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Gwasanaeth Cyngor ar Feddyginiathau Cymru
Welsh Medicines Advice Service