

Northland Surgery
Self-Care Practice Policy
(February 2016)

Self-care is a lifelong habit and culture. It is the action individuals take for themselves and their families to stay healthy and take care of minor and long term conditions, based on their knowledge and the information available and working in collaboration with health and social care professions where necessary.

Self-care involves a spectrum of care including:

- Making healthy lifestyle choices such as physical activity and healthy eating which will allow the maintenance of good health and prevention of ill-health.
- Making effective use of medicines and health care interventions.
- Self-diagnosis which involves being able to make a risk assessment of symptoms, screening and assessing these, if necessary, in partnership with a healthcare professional who need not be a Doctor.
- Self-treatment involving responsible use of medication (OTC and prescription).
- Self-monitoring involves keeping a check on signs and symptoms of flare ups and deterioration or improvement in a health condition.
- Self-management which includes being able to handle the symptoms of disease either alone or in partnership with health and social care professionals or other people with the same health condition.

Self-care for healthy living

Staying healthy is important for everyone, even if patients are living with a long-term condition. This means eating healthily, exercising regularly, quitting smoking and drinking in moderation.

Self-care for common conditions

Did you know that one in five GP visits are for common conditions, such as backache, headache or cough? For most people, they are not serious health problem - patients just want to know how to relieve it and want a treatment that acts fast. They also want to know how long you're going to suffer or what they should do if symptoms change.

The good news is that self-care can help patients manage most of these problems. It may mean they don't have to spend time waiting to see GP but can get on and start

tackling their symptoms. Self-care for common conditions can also help free up some of the GP's time, making it easier to get an appointment when patients have a more serious condition.

Find out more about self-care for common conditions

The Self-Care Forum has produced Factsheets to help you take care of the most common ailments. These provide useful facts about common conditions, what patients can expect to happen, how to help themselves, when they should see your GP and where to find out more information. Research shows people using these Factsheets felt more able to manage their common condition.

Click on the link for the Factsheets you need:

- [Low back pain](#)
- [Eczema](#)
- [Heartburn/indigestion](#)
- [Children's fever](#)
- [Constipation](#)
- [Headache/migraine](#)
- [Cough \(adults\)](#)
- [Acne](#)
- [Sprains and strains](#)
- [Sore throat](#)

For more information on other common conditions, visit the [NHS Choices](#) or [Patient UK](#) websites. If patients are not sure about their symptoms, they can check by click here for the [NHS Choices symptom checker](#) where they can get advice on what to do next.

If you need more advice or you are unsure what the right thing to do is, ask the Pharmacist for advice or speak to a Doctor or make an appointment to discuss your problem further.

Minor Ailments

The provision of a Minor Ailments Service is available to all patients through all community Pharmacies. This service improves patient accessibility to treatment without the need of an appointment so reducing the number of inappropriate GP consultations for minor ailments, allowing GP's more time with patients who really need them.

Minor Ailments covers the following conditions:

- Vaginal thrush
- Oral thrush
- Head lice
- Cold sores
- Mouth ulcers
- Threadworms
- Athlete's foot
- Groin itch
- Diarrhea
- Ear wax

The pharmacist will ask the patient about: their symptoms, other medicines they take, illnesses they have. This will help them make an appropriate recommendation for treatment. In some cases the pharmacist may need to refer the patient to the GP, but in the majority of cases the pharmacist will be able to treat the patient directly.

Self-care for long-term conditions

Did you know that patients that are living with a long-term condition will spend, on average, six hours a year with a healthcare professional and the remaining 8,754 hours managing their health for themselves?

Living with a long-term condition brings challenges and it's important to have the confidence, support and information to manage your health. Self-care can help patients make the most of living with their condition, rather than avoiding or missing out on things because of it. Self-care puts the patient in control.

Research shows that people with long-term conditions who take more control of their health feel more able to cope with their health problem, have better pain management, fewer flare ups and more energy.

We are committed to helping patients live their life with a long-term condition. That is why the Practice holds clinics where patients can get advice on the following conditions:

- Asthma
- Diabetes
- Hypertension (High blood pressure)
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Coronary Heart Disease
- Smoking Cessation

We will also work in partnership with the patient and other Healthcare professionals to create the right care plan for the patients' needs. It is important for the patient to think about what they want from a care plan - it can help the patient if you know what they want to discuss with GP or Practice Nurse.

NHS Choices suggests some questions patients could ask:

- Where can I find out about self-help courses for people who have long-term conditions?
- I want to find out more about my condition. What are the best places to do this?
- Is there any new equipment that might help me manage day-to-day. If so, how do I get it?
- How do I meet other people who have the same condition as me? Is there a local or national support group?
- Are there any lifestyle changes I should make to help my health, such as giving up smoking, avoiding certain foods, or doing more of a certain type of exercise?
- What are the results of my tests and what do they mean for me?
- What happens next?
- What can I do?
- What can the Doctor do?

Find out more about self-care for long-term conditions

There are a range of free online courses aimed at helping people who are living with a long-term condition to manage their condition better on a daily basis:

- [The Expert Patients Programme](#)
- [DAFNE](#) (Dose Adjustment for Normal Eating) and [DESMOND](#) (Diabetes Education and Self-Management for Ongoing and Newly Diagnosed) for people with diabetes

These courses usually run over several sessions and will provide advice and tools to put patients in control of their condition.

The following websites also provide good information that can help patients understand more about the common condition or long-term health problem that affects them:

- [NHS Choices](#)
- [Patient UK](#)