

BURWELL SURGERY PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP (PPG)

Pharmacy First

At our July PPG meeting we discussed “Pharmacy First” which launched in January 2024 and thought it would be helpful to explain more about how this new service operates. Pharmacy First has been introduced by the NHS as a way of allowing patients to get treatment for common infections without needing a GP appointment. It covers seven conditions:

- sinusitis (12 years and over)
- sore throat (5 years and over)
- earache (1-17 years)
- infected insect bites (1 year and over)
- impetigo (1 year and over)
- shingles (18 years and over)
- uncomplicated urinary tract infections (UTIs) in women aged 16-64 years

For each condition the pharmacist has to follow clear guidance on when a patient can be treated under the service and when they should be referred to another healthcare professional - this is what the pharmacist will use to decide if the patient is eligible for the service. People with symptoms suggestive of the seven conditions will be provided with advice and, if it's clinically appropriate, they will also be supplied with a prescription-only treatment (where normal NHS prescription charge rules will apply) or an over-the-counter medicine.

This is an extension of the service previously called Community Pharmacy Consultation Service (CPCS) where minor illnesses were referred to the pharmacy for advice and over-the-counter medicine. The Pharmacy First scheme now incorporates minor illnesses such as skin rashes, coughs, colds, hay fever, stings, heartburn and many more. Pharmacists are unable to prescribe prescription-only medication for these minor illnesses, but can offer advice and over-the-counter medication and refer patients back to the GP/elsewhere if necessary.

Over 95% of pharmacies have signed up to offer Pharmacy First, including Jardines in Burwell as well as Boots, Lords, Superdrug and other pharmacies in Newmarket.

You can visit a pharmacy without a referral, or you might be referred electronically to a participating pharmacy of your choice by the Burwell Surgery team following an AskMyGP enquiry, or after contacting other parts of the NHS like 111.

The PPG heard some good examples from the Surgery of where people had made contact through AskMyGP about a minor condition while they were at work, and had been given an electronic referral to a pharmacy near their workplace, allowing them to start a course of treatment immediately.

The next meeting of the PPG is at 6.30pm on Tuesday 15th October 2024 at Burwell Day Centre – all welcome. We had a great turnout for July's meeting when we also successfully trialled remote access for four people who were not able to attend in person. If you would like to attend the PPG for the first time, or if you can't attend in person but can join via Microsoft Teams, then please contact admin.burwellsurgery@nhs.net