

# What everyone should have in their medicine cabinet

Even minor illnesses and ailments - like colds, headaches and diarrhoea - can disrupt your life. Be prepared for most common ailments by keeping a well-stocked medicine cabinet at home.



**This leaflet explains the essential medicines that your cabinet should contain. This list is not exhaustive, but it will help you deal with most minor ailments.**

## **Pain relief and anti-inflammatory medicines**

Painkillers like aspirin and paracetamol are highly effective at relieving most minor aches and pains, like headaches and menstrual (period) pain. Aspirin must not be given to children under 16. These medicines also help with some minor ailments, like the common cold, by reducing aches and pains and high temperatures. Ibuprofen is an effective painkiller that can also help to reduce the inflammation in arthritis, back pain, limb or joint pain and other injuries.

## **Antihistamines**

These are useful for dealing with allergies and insect bites. They're also helpful if you have hay fever. Antihistamines can come in the form of creams that you apply to the skin (topical antihistamine), or tablets that you swallow (oral antihistamine). Antihistamine creams soothe insect stings, bites, rashes and itching from stinging nettles. Antihistamine tablets help to control hay fever symptoms and calm minor allergic reactions to food.

They can also help to calm itchiness during chickenpox. Some antihistamines may cause drowsiness. Ask your pharmacist about this as they may have antihistamines that don't cause drowsiness.

## **Oral rehydration salts**

Fever, diarrhoea and vomiting make us lose water and essential minerals and can lead to dehydration. If you have these symptoms and can't continue your normal diet, oral rehydration salts can help to restore your body's natural balance of minerals and fluid. They also contain glucose for energy. They relieve discomfort and tiredness but don't fight the underlying cause of your illness, like a virus or bacteria. Rehydration salts are available at your local pharmacy.

## **Indigestion treatment**

If you have stomach ache, heartburn or trapped wind, a simple antacid will reduce stomach acidity and bring relief. It's ideal after a celebration or party. Antacids come as chewable tablets or tablets that dissolve in water or in liquid form.



For more information, help and support go to [www.choosewellmanchester.org.uk](http://www.choosewellmanchester.org.uk) or visit NHS Choices at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Choose the right care**

Keep a lotion of at least factor 30. Even brief exposure to the sun can cause sunburn and increase your risk of skin cancer. Ensure that your sunscreen provides UVA protection. You can protect yourself further against the sun by wearing a hat and sunglasses, and by avoiding the sun during the hottest part of the day (between 11am and 3pm).

### First aid

As well as the medicines discussed above, keep a well-prepared first aid kit. This can help to treat minor cuts, sprains and bruises and it can reduce the risk of cuts becoming infected. It should contain the following items:

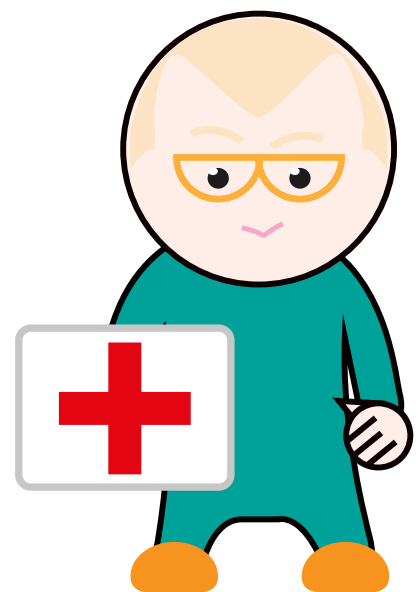
- **Bandages:** these can support injured limbs, like sprains. They also apply direct pressure to larger cuts before getting them treated in hospital and keep dressings in place while wounds are healing.
- **Plasters:** a range of sizes, waterproof if possible.
- **Thermometer:** digital thermometers that you put in your mouth produce very accurate readings. A thermometer placed under the arm is a good way to read a baby's temperature.
- **Antiseptic:** liquid or wipes can be used to clean cuts before they're dressed (bandaged). Creams can treat a range of conditions, including insect stings, ulcers and pimples.
- **Eyewash solution:** this will help to wash out grit or dirt in the eyes.
- **Sterile dressings:** larger injuries should be covered with a sterile dressing to prevent infection until treatment can be given by a health professional.

- **Medical tape:** this is used to secure dressings. It can also be used to tape an injured finger to an uninjured one, creating a makeshift splint.
- **Tweezers:** for taking out splinters. If splinters are left in, they can cause discomfort and become infected.

### Your pharmacist can help

Don't forget that your local pharmacist can provide advice and low-cost home treatments for many minor ailments like coughs and colds, asthma and eczema, hay fever and period pain. Instead of booking an appointment with your GP, you can see your local pharmacist any time: just walk in.

Always follow the directions on medicine packets and information leaflets, and never exceed the stated dose. If you have further questions about any of these medicines or you want to buy them, ask your local pharmacist. Always keep medicines out of the sight and reach of children. A high and lockable cupboard in a cool, dry place is ideal. Regularly check the expiry dates. If a medicine is past its use-by date, don't use it or throw it away. Take it to your pharmacy where it can be disposed of safely.



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