Did you know your community pharmacist can offer advice on support on a range of minor ailments?

Community Pharmacists can answer questions on choosing and using the right medicines and provide easy-to-understand advice on treating everyday ailments such as coughs, colds and flu. NHS 24 also has a number of community pharmacists who are able to answer medicine and pharmacy-related questions over the telephone on 111.

Allan Thomas, Lead Pharmacist - Public Health and Community, explains: “Your local community pharmacist can give you advice on a range of minor ailments from coughs and colds, to upset stomachs and indigestion.

“In many cases, you don’t need to see your GP. And with a pharmacy in many towns and villages, you can get help and advice at a time that suits you.”

In addition to dispensing prescriptions and advising patients on their prescribed medicines, your community pharmacist offers a range of other services:

- If you qualify for the minor ailment service, your community pharmacist may prescribe medication for you following a consultation, or refer you on to another healthcare professional.
- Professional to professional phone line to NHS ADOC for more serious cases that may require a GP.
- In many cases, your community pharmacist can supply your repeat medicines if your GP is not available.
- Your community pharmacist can give women advice and supply emergency hormonal contraception up to 120 hours after unprotected sexual intercourse or failure of contraception. They can also offer testing for Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea and offer treatment for Chlamydia.
- Your community pharmacist can supply condoms through the C Card scheme.
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- Your community pharmacist can give advice, support and where appropriate, prescribe nicotine replacement therapy and other treatments to those giving up smoking.
- You can return unused prescribed medicines to your community pharmacist.
- Your community pharmacist holds records of your medicines to ensure that the safety of any future medication is checked.
- There will be a private area to discuss sensitive issues.

Many pharmacies also offer:
- advice on travel health;
- pregnancy testing;
- collection and delivery of prescriptions;
- supervised methadone supply;
- needle exchange;
- hold drugs for palliative care patients;
- advice on newly started medicines;
- advice on high risk medicines, such as methotrexate and lithium; and
- oral health advice (including Child Smile in certain areas).

Allan adds: “Remember you can also do a number of things to ensure you are prepared to deal with common illnesses. Like having a sufficient supply of medicines such as paracetamol, sore throat and cough remedies, as these will help to relieve the symptoms of common ailments.

“If you take regular medication, check your existing supplies and only order what you need to make sure you have enough to see you through the weekends, public holidays and holidays away from home.”

To find out more about ‘When you’re ill, know who to turn to’ campaign, visit www.nhsaaa.net and click on the ‘When you’re ill, know who to turn to’ icon. Or have a look at our Facebook and Twitter pages: #who2turn2.

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