

## Parents in the East of England urged to think pharmacist first for minor illness in their children

- A major new public health campaign urges parents in the East of England to consult a pharmacist first for minor illness, instead of GP or A&E
- 18 million GP appointments and 2.1 million visits to A&E for self-treatable conditions cost the NHS £850 million per year
- Using a pharmacy for minor health concerns eases pressures on GPs

Millions of parents could get more convenient and timely expert advice if their child has a minor illness by opting to go to their local pharmacist first instead of the GP.

Research for the NHS shows just 10% of mums and dads in the East of England with children under the age of five would consider seeking help about a minor health concern from a high street pharmacist in the first instance. 32% would opt for an appointment with their GP while 1% of those questioned would choose emergency care as their first point of call.

This is despite an overwhelming majority of adults (82%) from East of England saying they are aware that pharmacists are qualified healthcare professionals who can give advice on most common illnesses which includes when and where to seek advice for more serious conditions.

The NHS is urging more parents to use their pharmacy first in a move which could help free up GP time for sicker patients and help save the NHS around £850 million each year as well as save time for busy families.

Around 95% of people live within a 20 minute walk of a local community pharmacy, making pharmacists extremely accessible and a valuable first port of call for minor health concerns such as coughs, colds, tummy troubles or teething.

Around 18 million GP appointments and 2.1 million visits to A&E are for self-treatable conditions - such as coughs and tummy troubles - at a cost of more than £850 million each year to the NHS. This is the equivalent of more than 220,000 hip replacements or 880,000 cataract operations.

The NHS nationally is working with community pharmacies to increase the range of patient services they provide including asthma audits and flu vaccinations and to promote the clinical expertise available from the pharmacy team.

**Dr David Levy, Medical Director for NHS England Midlands and East, said:** *“Local pharmacies are so much more than just a place to collect your prescriptions.*

*“A pharmacist is qualified to advise you on the kind of minor illnesses which are particularly common at this time of year, and the great thing is you don’t need to book an appointment.*

*“That might mean getting advice about how to manage your child’s illness at home, suggesting some over-the-counter medication to help ease their symptoms, or recommending that you book an appointment with your GP if it’s something more serious.*

*“It can sometimes be difficult to know the best thing to do when your child is ill, but making the pharmacy your first stop takes away the guesswork and is a great habit to get into.”*

The call for people, in particular the five million parents of children under five, to use their local pharmacist first for advice is part of the Stay Well Pharmacy campaign launched by the NHS today. It is backed by pharmacists and Netmums, the UK’s biggest parenting website.

A survey carried out as part of the campaign reveals that the proportion of adults questioned from the East of England who would get advice from the pharmacist for minor health concerns is only 17%. This went down to just 10% for parents of young children.

While 78% of people agree they trust advice from their pharmacist, there are misconceptions about the level of service this highly trained group of healthcare professionals can offer in terms of advice and expertise.

28% feel it is difficult to discuss health concerns in private with a pharmacist, with many not being aware that more than nine out of 10 pharmacies have a private consultation room. 23% feel they would need to visit the GP anyway, so go direct to the doctor in the first instance. However, NHS England found that among adults who have received advice from a pharmacist in the past six months for themselves or their child, 66% found it useful and 17% needed to go to the GP afterwards.

**Annie O’Leary, Editor in Chief at Netmums, said:** *“We’re committed to raising awareness of the best way parents can keep their little ones well, and that’s why we’re supporting the Stay Well Pharmacy campaign from NHS England. Pharmacists are highly trained NHS health professionals who are able to offer clinical advice for a wide range of minor health concerns, right there and then. Pharmacists can assess your child’s symptoms and provide clinical advice, or simply provide reassurance that it is nothing more serious. We know convenience is key and parents should consider using the pharmacy team as their first port of call, after all, 95% of the population is within easy reach of a local community pharmacy.”*

**Oliver Jones, a Pharmacy Technician in Norwich, said:** *“Community pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are trained to provide clinical advice for minor health concerns. With most people living within easy reach of a pharmacy, we are a convenient resource for parents with young children, to help them effectively and safely manage a range of minor health concerns. Please ask to see us if you need our advice.”*

**Royal Pharmaceutical Society England Board Chair Sandra Gidley said:** *“It is great to see a campaign putting pharmacists at the front of people’s minds when it comes to getting clinical advice and over the counter medicines for minor health concerns such as coughs, colds or tummy troubles. Pharmacists are healthcare experts and are the right people to see if you need clinical advice for a minor health concern.”*

The NHS 'Stay Well Pharmacy' campaign will be supported by a TV advert, and digital and social media advertising. For more information, search [NHS.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) where you can also locate your local pharmacy services.

**Ends**

Pharmacy Technician Oliver Jones is available for interview if required. For further information contact: [nhs@freuds.com](mailto:nhs@freuds.com)

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## Notes to editors:

- Search [nhs.uk/staywellpharmacy](https://nhs.uk/staywellpharmacy) to find out more
- Stay Well Pharmacy videos and the TV Advert can be downloaded here: <http://bit.ly/2s9xN0U>
- There are around 300 million GP appointments each year. It is estimated that 6% of these visits are from those patients who could go to the pharmacy or self-care. NHS England General Practice Forward April 2016: [www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/gpfv.pdf](http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/gpfv.pdf)
- The £31 cost of a GP appointment - <http://www.pssru.ac.uk/project-pages/unit-costs/unit-costs-2017>.
- 2.1 million visits to A&E for self-treatable conditions: NHS Digital Hospital Accident and Emergency Activity, 2016-17 <http://digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB30112>
- The average cost of a visit to A&E was estimated at around £148 in 2016/17: NHS Improvement Reference costs 2016/17: highlights, analysis and introduction to the data: <https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/reference-costs/>
- Equivalent hip replacements or cataract operations: NHS England and Clinical Commissioners, Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: A Consultation on guidance for CCGs: [https://www.engage.england.nhs.uk/consultation/over-the-counter-items-not-routinely-prescribed/user\\_uploads/otc-guidance-2.pdf](https://www.engage.england.nhs.uk/consultation/over-the-counter-items-not-routinely-prescribed/user_uploads/otc-guidance-2.pdf) (p. 6). Every £1 million saved could fund 270 more hip replacements and 1040 more cataract operations.
- Stay Well Pharmacy Campaign survey into public use and awareness of pharmacists was carried out by Kantar TNS Online Bus between November 2<sup>nd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>. A representative sample of 2,209 adults aged 16+ were surveyed
  - Just 10% of parents with children under the age of five said they would consider seeking help from a high street pharmacist in the first instance with a minor health concern such as earache, diarrhoea or tummy ache which lasted more than 24 hours
  - For the 32% of those who opted to contact the GP, 22% made an appointment and 10% phoned their GP for advice.
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- 95% of the population. - <http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/4/8/e005764.full>. Accessed via: Public Health England, Pharmacy: A Way Forward for Public Health - [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/643520/Pharmacy\\_a\\_way\\_forward\\_for\\_public\\_health.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643520/Pharmacy_a_way_forward_for_public_health.pdf)
- There are 45,923 registered pharmacists, 19,510 registered pharmacy technicians and 12,042 community pharmacies in England. Community pharmacies in England provide a service to around 1.2 million people every day. Sourced via; General Pharmaceutical Council data - 4 February 2018 and Public Health England, Royal Society of Public Health (2016) Building Capacity: Realising the potential of community pharmacy assets for improving the public's health. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/643520/Pharmacy\\_a\\_way\\_forward\\_for\\_public\\_health.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643520/Pharmacy_a_way_forward_for_public_health.pdf)
- Every pharmacist is trained in managing minor illnesses and providing health and wellbeing advice, so they are the right person to see for minor health concerns. They train for five years in the use of medicines before they qualify and register with the professional regulator, and some also have an additional prescribing qualification. Pharmacy technicians are also required to register with the professional regulator and are subject to the same fitness to practice framework as pharmacists.
- Additional quotes:  
**Rita Ghelani, Pharmacist:** "I've been a pharmacist for over 20 years and I'm proud to be one. On a daily basis, I'm treating and advising on a whole range of minor health concerns, but sadly not enough people are coming to pharmacy teams when

they are feeling under the weather as there seems to be a misconception about the level of service that we can offer. So I'm pleased this Stay Well Pharmacy campaign has launched, hopefully it will encourage people to visit us first next time they have a minor health concern."

**end**