**WESTGATE SURGERY**

**PRESCRIBING GUIDANCE**

*Correct as of 24/3/2020*

**PRESCRIPTIONS**

Please send **ALL** prescriptions electronically to avoid patients having to unnecessarily come into the surgery to collect paper prescriptions.

Repeat prescriptions may be only be issued for ONE month at a time – this is being done to ensure that community pharmacies do not run out of stock and are able to continue supplying patients with ther repeat medications. Where more than one month is requested by a patient, they are being put onto repeat dispensing. *(Official guidance around this is being written by the CCG – 23/3/20)*

**PARACETAMOL PRESCRIBING**

We have received reports that people are requesting prescriptions for Paracetamol at GP surgeries across Kent because stocks in local community pharmacies and supermarkets have run out. Supermarkets and pharmacies are limiting stock that is supplied to the public to help maintain stock levels.

**GP surgeries may ONLY prescribe Paracetamol where it is required for a long term condition. Otherwise, patients must buy their medication OTC.**

Please advise patients requesting prescriptions as part of their preparations for coronavirus to avoid panic buying, in line with government advice, and to purchase a supply of paracetamol over the counter as and when these are available. We recommend that practices don’t issue prescriptions for paracetamol in this situation. This will help ensure that stock is kept for those clinical indications for those patients where a prescription is required.

We will continue to review this guidance. **Heather Lucas** - **Associate Director of Medicines Optimisation for the East Kent CCGs**

**OTC MEDICATION**

The CCG guidance on this has not changed. ‘*Your GP, nurse or pharmacist will not generally give you a prescription for over the counter medicines for a range of minor health concerns. Instead, over the counter medicines are available to buy in a pharmacy or supermarket in your local community. The team of health professionals at your local pharmacy can offer help and clinical advice to manage minor health concerns and if your symptoms suggest it’s more serious, they’ll ensure you get the care you need. Please help the NHS to use resources sensibly.’*

As with Paracetamol, a product being out of stock at a pharmacy/supermarket is **NOT** a valid reason for a patient to have an OTC item prescribed. (Note some community pharmacies are unfortunately advising this course of action.)

**RESCUE PACKS**

We have been made aware of some posts on social media saying that if you have a lung condition, your GP will issue a rescue pack of steroids and antibiotics. THIS IS NOT TRUE.

If you have a diagnosis of COPD, and are normally advised to have a rescue pack then it's a good idea to check you have one. This is only recommended for some patients with COPD to be used as part of a personalised plan.

For people with asthma, we **will not be providing rescue packs** as standard.

If you are acutely unwell, you will need to be added to the daily triage list to speak to a clinician; otherwise medication will not be issued.

If someone’s asthma is bad enough to consider steroids it is essential they are assessed by a health care professional. Even at this busy time for the NHS, getting early support for any problems with your lungs are critical to keep you well and out of hospital. The surgery is open as normal for telephone triage.

*Good information for patients:*

* [*British Lung Foundation*](https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/coronavirus)
* [*Asthma UK*](https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/triggers/coronavirus-covid-19/)
* [*Rightbreathe*](https://www.rightbreathe.com/?s=) *(Inhaler technique videos*

**INHALERS**

We will be issuing inhalers only for patients with a known diagnosis recorded in their notes of a respiratory condition such as asthma or COPD.

**METHOTREXATE**

We appreciate that in these challenging times routine monitoring for patients prescribed DMARDs may become difficult. We have contacted the rheumatology consultants at EKHFT and have received the following information.

**The current advice is to continue treatment if blood tests within the last 3 months is in range. However, if a patient becomes acutely unwell or they have Covid-19 symptoms, they should contact the specialist team.**

“*We discussed this as a department briefly yesterday and agreed that extending to 3 monthly blood monitoring for stable DMARD patients should now happen (BSR guidance anyway). Risk benefit re attending for testing should be considered on an individual case basis.”*

On this basis a move to 3 monthly monitoring for stable patients would be considered appropriate to avoid vulnerable patients being brought in for blood test.