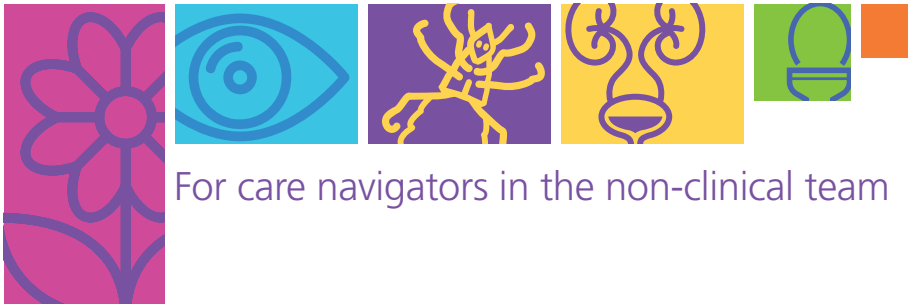


# Common Ailments handbook



For care navigators in the non-clinical team

- head lice
- conjunctivitis
- hay fever
- urinary tract infections and cystitis
- vomiting and diarrhoea
- coughs and colds
- sprains and strains
- bites and stings
- dental pain
- verrucas and athlete's foot



# Introduction

As the pressures facing clinical staff in your practice are ever increasing, your role in helping patients with varying needs get the right support at the right time is more important than ever.

Care navigators can help advise and signpost patients to the most appropriate healthcare professional, such as a pharmacist or dentist, while also recognising when a patient should be seen by a clinician or directed to accident and emergency (A&E).

This handbook has been produced to help you develop your non-clinical team, and can be used to train new staff on common ailments, which could potentially be treated without a GP consultation.

Most symptoms of the conditions outlined in this handbook can be managed in the pharmacy. However, if you are ever in any doubt, you should book an appointment with an appropriate clinician. While the patient is waiting to see their GP, you could advise them to visit a pharmacy, as the pharmacist may be able to recommend something to help with their symptoms in the meantime.





# Head lice

## Overview


### What are lice?

- Small, wingless insects
- Size of a sesame seed
- Live on the scalp, feeding off human blood.

### What are nits?

- Empty egg casings
- Attach to hair shaft around the ears or close to the scalp.

## Spotting head lice

- Detection combing for live lice
  - Black specks on the pillow (lice droppings)
  - Itchy scalp.
- 

## Signposting

In most cases, the **pharmacist** and their team should be able to advise on the most suitable treatment options, including for the following:

- Children under six months old
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women
- Patients with asthma or other breathing problems
- Patients with skin problems such as eczema or psoriasis
- Recurring infection.



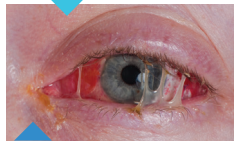
**Please note**, there is usually no need to direct patients to the clinician.

## What would you do?

A patient calls the surgery and is very upset. She has received a letter from the school, which explains that there's been an outbreak of head lice. She wants to see the GP so that she can get a strong lotion to stop her child catching the lice.

# Conjunctivitis

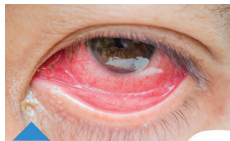
## Symptoms



Infective



Allergic



Irritant

## Infective conjunctivitis

Symptoms usually start in one eye then spread to the other eye

Sticky discharge, red or pink whites of eye, gritty or sore feeling

## Allergic/irritant conjunctivitis

Usually affects both eyes

Watery or stringy discharge, red or pink white of eyes, itchy

## Signposting

In most cases, the **pharmacist** and their team should be able to advise on treatment options. However, you should direct patients to a **clinician** if:

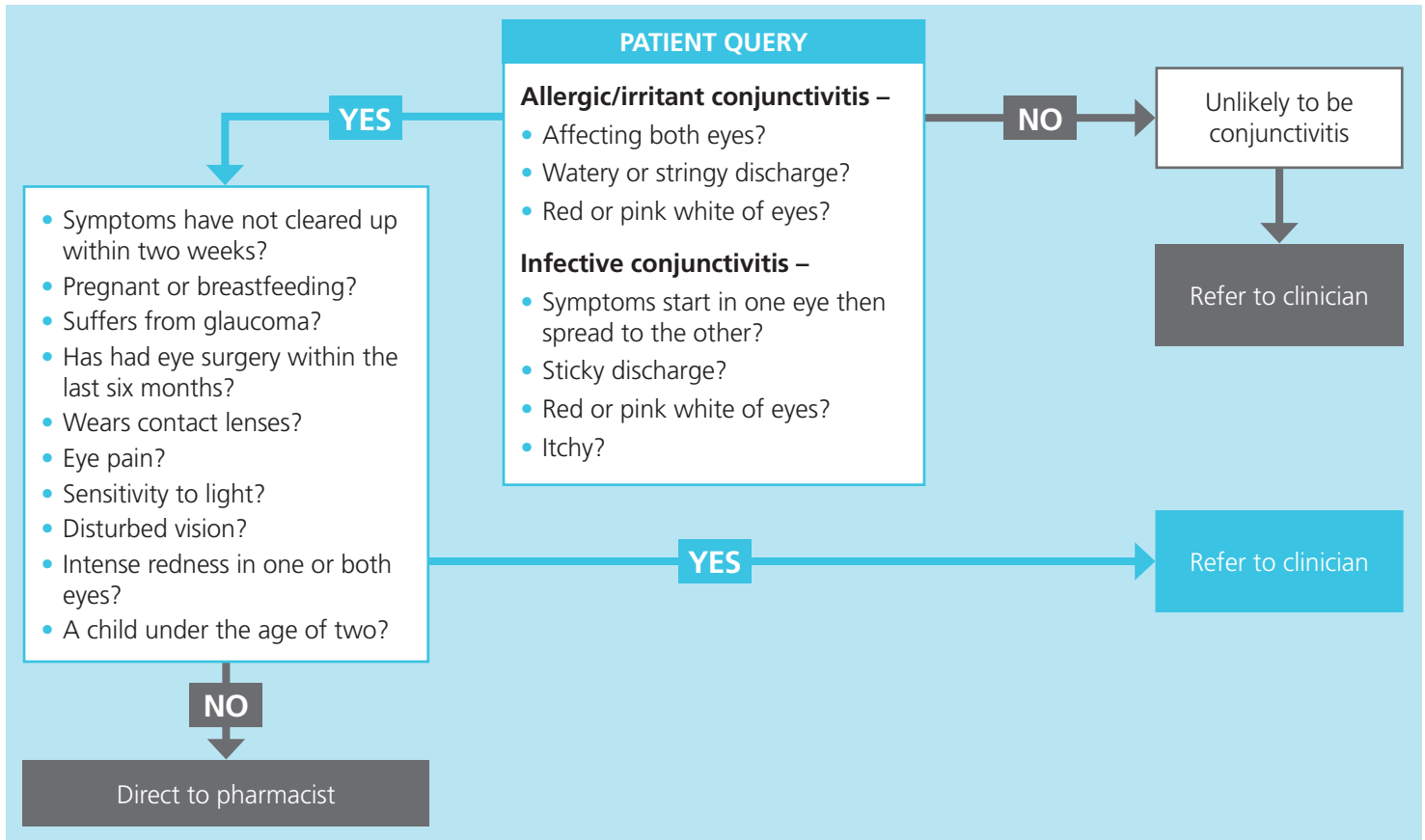
- Their symptoms have not cleared up within two weeks
- They are pregnant or breastfeeding
- They suffer from glaucoma
- They have had eye surgery within the last six months
- They wear contact lenses
- They are a child under two years old
- They have eye pain
- They are experiencing sensitivity to light (photophobia)
- They have disturbed vision
- There is intense redness in one or both eyes.



## What would you do?

A patient has a red and slightly sticky eye and has dropped into the surgery, as he wants to see a doctor as soon as possible.

## At a glance



# Hay fever

## Overview

- A very common condition that is due to an allergic reaction to pollen.
- Affects up to one in five people at some point in their life.
- The pollen can be present all year round and may originate from trees, grass or weeds.

## Symptoms

The most common symptoms your patients will experience are:

- Sneezing
- Runny/blocked nose
- Itchy, red or watery eyes.

## Signposting

The **pharmacist** and their team can manage most cases and advise on the most suitable treatment options. Please note, there are products available for patients aged one year and older.

Direct patients to a **clinician** if they:

- Feel like OTC treatments haven't been working
- Are experiencing persistent complications, such as worsening of asthma or repeated episodes of sinusitis
- Have any unusual symptoms, such as experiencing them during the winter or only at their workplace
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding.



## What would you do?

A patient is worried, as their hay fever symptoms still haven't cleared up despite summer being over. They normally only suffer from symptoms in July and August, but it is now October and they are still persisting.

## At a glance

### PATIENT QUERY

Symptoms include sneezing, runny or blocked nose, itchy, red or watery eyes.

- Do they have asthma or eczema and are their symptoms worsening?
- Pregnant/breastfeeding woman?
- Feel like OTC treatments have not been working?
- Experiencing persistent complications?
- Have any unusual symptoms?

**YES**

Refer to clinician

**NO**

Direct to pharmacist



# UTIs and cystitis

## Overview

- UTIs are common infections that affect the bladder, kidneys and tubes connected to them.
- They are more common in women.
- Symptoms usually pass within a few days.

## Symptoms

### Symptoms of lower UTIs (e.g. cystitis)

- Urinating more frequently
- Pain when urinating
- Sudden urge to urinate
- Unable to empty the bladder
- Stomach pain
- Cloudy, smelly, bloody urine.

### Symptoms of upper UTIs (e.g. kidney infection)

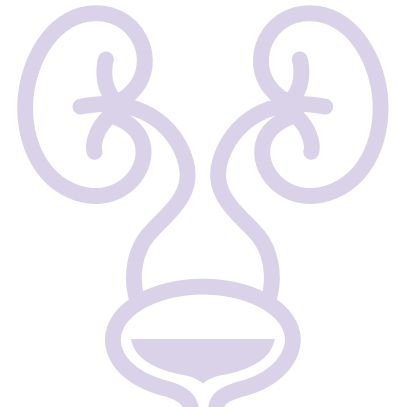
- High temperature
- Pain in sides/back
- Sickness
- Confusion/agitation/restlessness.

## Signposting

The **pharmacist** and their team can manage most cases of lower UTIs and advise on the best treatment options.

Direct to a **clinician** if the patient has symptoms of an upper UTI or if they:

- Are male or a child under 12 years old
- Have had cystitis for longer than two days or this is their second bout in a month
- Have tried OTC treatments with no improvement
- Have blood in their urine
- Have diabetes
- Are pregnant.





## At a glance

### PATIENT QUERY

- Blood in the urine?
- Pregnant woman?
- Male patient?
- Child under 12 years?
- Symptoms recur frequently?
- Symptoms not improved after one day of treatment?
- Customer has had symptoms for longer than two days or this is their second bout in a month?
- Pain in lower back or abdomen?

**NO**

Direct to pharmacist

**YES**

- Urinating more frequently?
- Pain when urinating?
- Sudden urge to urinate?
- Unable to empty the bladder?
- Stomach pain?
- Cloudy, smelly, bloody urine?

**NO**

Unlikely to be cystitis

Refer to clinician

**YES**

Refer to clinician



# Vomiting and diarrhoea

## Overview

Vomiting and diarrhoea could be caused by a stomach bug or food poisoning. Symptoms usually start a few hours or days after picking up the bug. The sufferer is most infectious from when symptoms start until two days after they've passed, so you should advise patients to stay off school or work until the symptoms have been absent for two days.

## Symptoms

- Sudden diarrhoea
- Feeling sick (nausea)
- Being sick (vomiting)
- Stomach ache or cramps
- High temperature of 38°C or above.



## Signposting

The **pharmacy** team should be able to help your patients with their symptoms. Products are available for signs of dehydration and relief from diarrhoea.



Direct patients to a **clinician** if they:

- Are a baby/child who has had six or more episodes of diarrhoea or three or more episodes of vomiting in the past 24 hours
- Are constantly vomiting and can't keep fluids down
- Are still dehydrated after trying products from the pharmacy
- Have persistent diarrhoea
- Have blood in their stools
- Have any other worrying symptoms (e.g. extreme weight loss, dark/black stools).



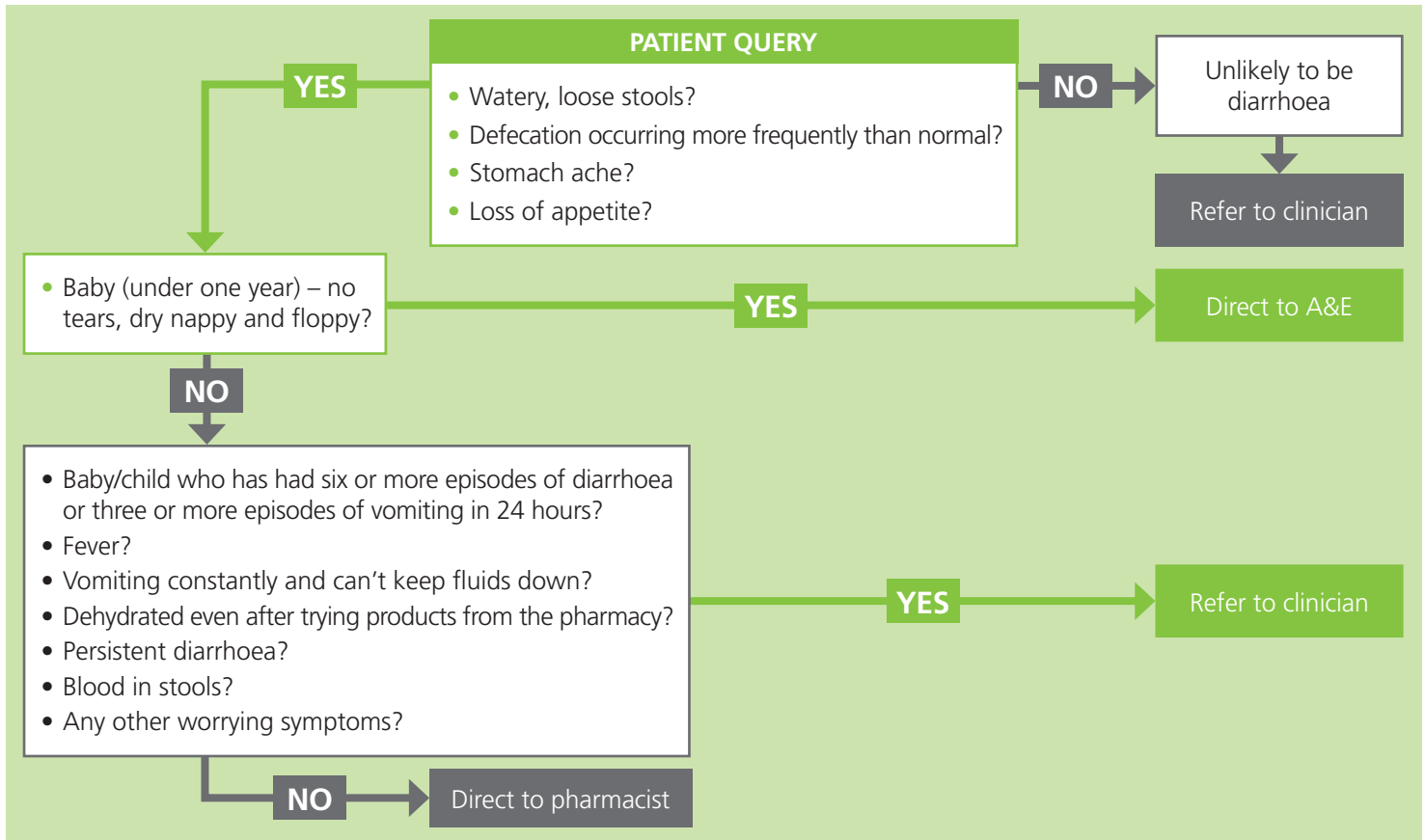
Direct to **A&E** if the patient is a baby (aged one or under) who is showing signs of dehydration (no tears, no wet nappies and floppy).



## What would you do?

A patient calls the surgery asking to see their GP. He has been feeling sick all night and thinks it's due to some fish he ate. He says he needs an appointment right away, as he has an important meeting in the afternoon.

## At a glance





# Coughs and colds

## Overview

Coughs and colds are very common and are rarely a sign of something serious. Treatment isn't always necessary as they are likely to get better on their own. General self-care advice includes resting and drinking plenty of fluids.

## Symptoms

Cold symptoms come on gradually and can include:

- Blocked or runny nose
- Sore throat
- Headaches
- Muscle aches
- Coughs and/or sneezing
- High temperature (more than 38°C in adults or 37.5°C in children).

**Please note**, symptoms may last longer in children.

## Signposting

Patients can usually get products from a **pharmacy** to relieve their cold symptoms and soothe their cough.

Direct any patients to a **clinician** if:

- They have been coughing for more than three weeks
- The cough is particularly severe or getting worse
- They are coughing up blood or experiencing shortness of breath, breathing difficulties or chest pain
- They suffer from chronic lung disease (e.g. COPD) and are on long-term medication
- There are any other worrying symptoms, such as unexplained weight loss, a persistent change in voice, lumps or swellings in the neck.



## What would you do?

A patient calls the surgery about an irritating dry cough he's had for about a month. He's taken a few cough syrups, but they haven't really helped. He's sure it will go away eventually, but his wife thought he should make an appointment.

## At a glance

### PATIENT QUERY

- Cold – sore throat, sneezing, runny nose, nasal congestion, decreased energy levels, headache, cough
- Cough – productive cough with phlegm ('chesty'); non-productive cough with no phlegm ('tickly/dry')

YES

- Coughing for more than three weeks?
- The cough is particularly severe or is getting worse?
- Coughing up blood or experiencing shortness of breath, breathing difficulties or chest pain?
- Suffer from chronic lung disease (e.g. COPD) and on long-term medication?
- Any other worrying symptoms – e.g. unexplained weight loss, a persistent change in voice, lumps or swellings in neck?

YES

Refer to clinician

NO

Direct to pharmacist



# Sprains and strains

## Overview

- These are common injuries affecting the muscles and ligaments.
- Sprains occur when ligaments are stretched. Common locations include the knees, ankles, wrists and thumbs.
- Strains occur when muscle fibres stretch or tear. They are common in the legs and back (e.g. hamstring strains and lumbar [lower back] strains).

## Symptoms

### Symptoms of sprains

- Pain around the affected joint
- Inability to use the joint normally or put weight on it
- Swelling, bruising and tenderness.

### Symptoms of strains

- Pain in the affected muscle at rest
- Pain in the muscle or associated joint during use
- Swelling, bruising or redness
- Muscle spasms
- Weakness and loss of some, or all, of the function in the affected muscle.

## Signposting

Most sprains and strains are relatively minor and can be managed by:

- PRICE therapy (Protection, Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation)
- Painkillers from the **pharmacy**.



Direct patients to a **clinician** if:

- They have severe pain
- They can't move the injured joint or muscle
- There is numbness, discolouration or coldness in any part of the injured area
- They don't feel any improvement within a few days of self-treatment.



Patients should be directed to **A&E** if:

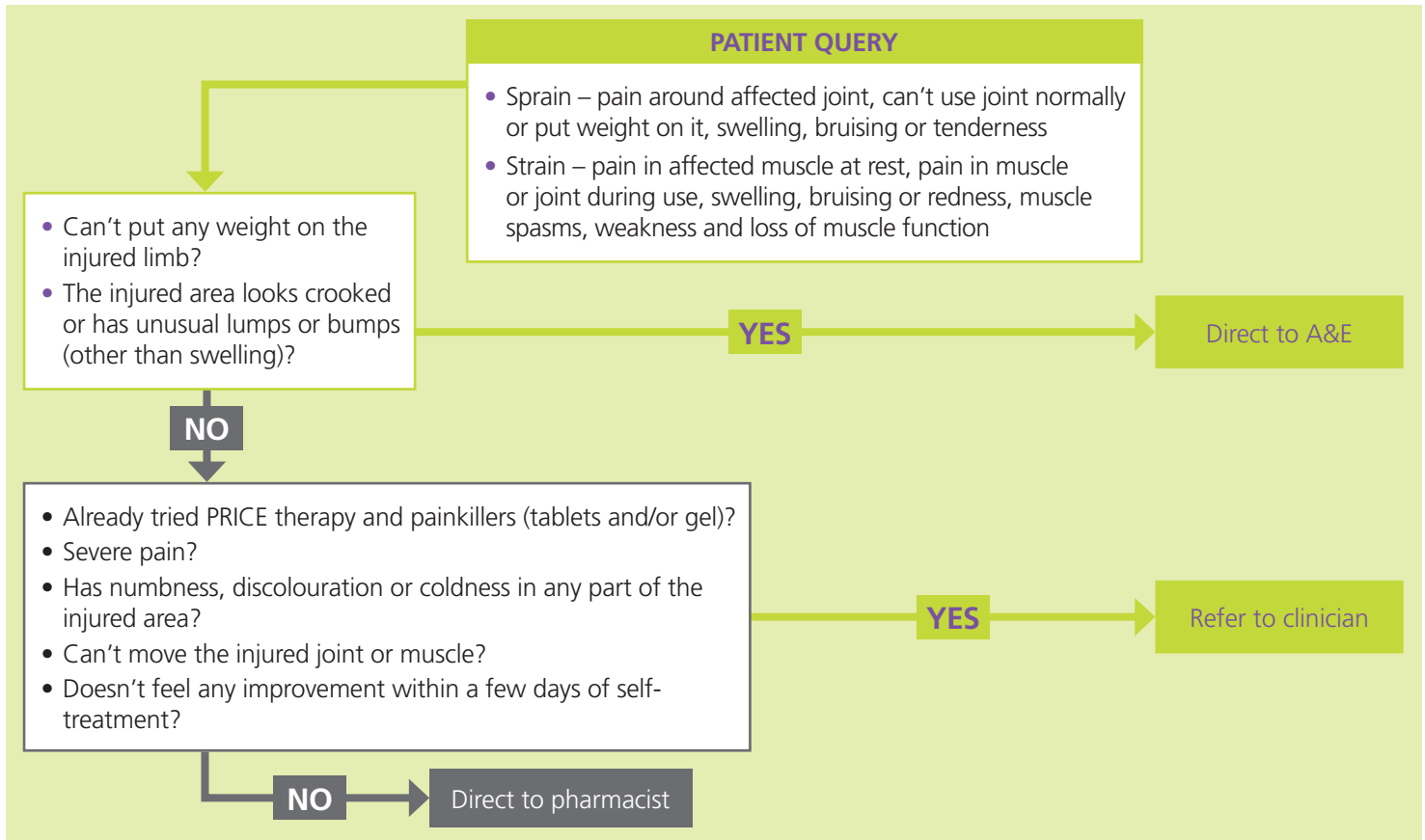
- They can't put any weight on the injured limb
- The injured area looks crooked or has unusual lumps or bumps (other than swelling).



## What would you do?

A patient complains of a pain in their ankle, which has been troubling them since playing football last week.

## At a glance





# Bites and stings

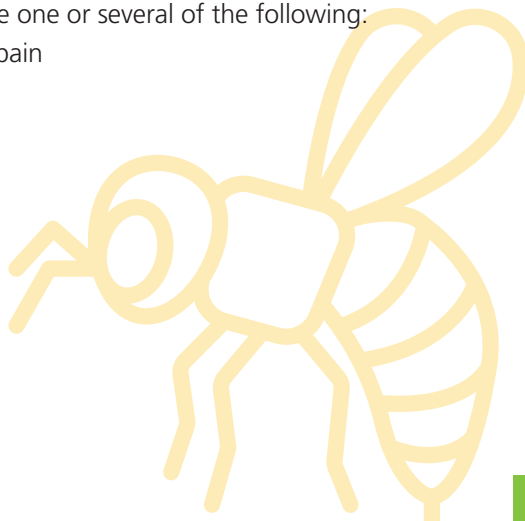
## Overview

Insect bites and stings are not usually serious and should get better within a few hours or days. Bugs that bite or sting include wasps, hornets, bees, horseflies, ticks, mosquitoes, fleas, bedbugs, spiders and midges.

## Symptoms

These can include one or several of the following:

- Sudden sharp pain
- Raised area
- Blistering
- Swelling
- Discomfort
- Itchiness.



## Signposting

The **pharmacist** and their team can usually advise on the most suitable treatment options.

Direct patients to a **clinician** if they:

- Have symptoms that don't start to improve within a few days or are getting worse
- Have been stung or bitten in the mouth or throat, or near the eyes
- Have symptoms of infection at the site of the bite, such as pus, increasing pain, swelling or redness
- Have symptoms of a more widespread infection, such as a fever, swollen glands and other flu-like symptoms.

Dial **999** for an ambulance if the patient has any symptoms of a severe reaction, such as:

- Wheezing or difficulty breathing
- A swollen face, mouth or throat
- Nausea or vomiting
- A fast heart rate
- Difficulty swallowing
- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Loss of consciousness.



## What would you do?

A patient has been out gardening and now has lots of painful, itchy spots on her arms and legs.





# Dental pain

## Overview

Dental pain may result from tooth decay, a condition that can occur when plaque (food and saliva) produces acid, which builds up on the teeth. If left untreated, it could progress to an abscess that requires urgent treatment.

## Symptoms

### Symptoms of toothache

- Mild or severe pain (e.g. when consuming hot or cold food and drink)
- Pain around the teeth and jaws
- Pain is worse at night
- Pain in sinuses
- Pain by the ear.

### Symptoms of abscess

- Intense, throbbing pain that gets gradually worse
- Pain that spreads to the ear and neck on the same side
- Pain that is worse when lying down
- Redness and swelling in the face
- Red, swollen gums
- Sensitivity to hot or cold food and drink
- Bad breath.

## Signposting

The **dentist** should be the first port of call.

If the patient can't get to the dentist, direct to the **pharmacist**.



## What would you do?

A patient complains of a pain that is made worse by drinking cold drinks.



# Verrucas

## Overview

Verrucas are small lumps on the skin and most patients will have one at some point in their life. They usually go away on their own, but this can take months or even years.

## Symptoms

- Usually on the ball of the foot, underside of the big toe or heel
- Multiple black spots
- Flat, thickened skin
- May be tender.



## Signposting

The **pharmacist** and their team can manage most cases and advise on the most appropriate treatment options.

Always direct patients to a **clinician** if they:

- Have diabetes
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Have a lot of verrucas.



## What would you do?

A patient asks to see the GP as her child has a lump on the ball of his foot and it has black spots in it.



# Athlete's foot

## Overview

Athlete's foot is a fungal infection and is easily passed from one person to another.

## Symptoms

It commonly affects the skin between the toes or on the bottom of the feet. Affected areas of skin may be:

- Dry, red, scaly and flaky
- White, soggy and cracked
- Itchy
- Sore
- Covered in small blisters.



## Signposting

The **pharmacist** and their team can manage most cases and advise on the most suitable treatment options.



Always direct patients to a **clinician** if they:

- Have a severe infection
- Notice that their athlete's foot hasn't started to improve after a week of treatment
- Are experiencing significant pain or discomfort.



## What would you do?

A patient would like an urgent appointment as they have an itchy rash between their toes and it is covered in blisters.



Frimley Clinical Commissioning Group in association with CIG Healthcare Partnership. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher.

© 2017 Communications International Group Ltd. Tel: 020 7434 1530.