

Pharmacy (or Chemists)

Community pharmacies (or chemists) can be open for longer hours than your GP surgery, and they are usually open at weekends or late at night. Some are also open on Bank Holidays. They can often provide medical advice and some treatments.

Pharmacists are qualified medical professionals and can give you advice about common symptoms, medicines and healthy living. You can go to see a pharmacist without having an appointment.

How to find your local pharmacy

[NHS.UK](https://www.nhs.uk) allows you to search for a list of your local pharmacies, and the services they provide, using your postcode.

What to expect from your pharmacy

Pharmacies can offer many different services including:

- Dispensing your prescription with advice on how to take your medicines, what effects you might notice and what to do if you find unpleasant side effects, or think the medicine is not working.
 - In certain circumstances, they can provide emergency supplies of your prescription medicines.
 - Advice on, and treatment for minor ailments. Depending on the symptoms you describe, the pharmacist will tell you if they think you should talk to a doctor, or may recommend you buy a medicine.
 - Advice on healthy living and disease prevention. In some pharmacies this will include professional counselling on stopping smoking, weight control or alcohol consumption.
 - Signposting. Pharmacies have information on other health and social services and how to access them.
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Think Pharmacy First

A campaign was launched to enable people who receive free prescriptions to go straight to their pharmacy for treatment for minor ailments. **Think Pharmacy First** aims to give patients who receive free prescriptions greater choice and faster access to treatment for minor conditions.

Think Pharmacy First offers patients who qualify, the choice of going straight to their pharmacist – without an appointment – for a consultation where they will be given advice and free over the counter medicine, where appropriate, for minor ailments. They will be referred to a GP where

necessary.

Think Pharmacy First is available to adults who are entitled to free prescriptions on the grounds of low income and their children. People over 60 are also entitled to use the scheme.

Among the minor ailments covered by the scheme are coughs, colds, sore throats, headaches, hay fever, heartburn or indigestion, stomach upsets, head lice and eczema.

For more information go to any pharmacy that shows a Think Pharmacy First window sticker or visit the [Newcastle Gateshead CCG website](#).

You can download a list of participating pharmacies [here](#).

Do I need to make an appointment?

Normally you don't need to make an appointment. It is possible to walk into any community pharmacy and ask to speak with the pharmacist, who hopefully should be able to spend some time with you. Some pharmacies have separate areas that you can use to give you more privacy.

However, this may not always be possible. During busy periods the pharmacist may ask you to come back later during a quieter time.

Prescriptions

Prescriptions are paid by the item and this cost changes each year. It is worth considering a [pre-payment certificate](#) which enables you to buy as many NHS prescriptions as you need for a set price. This could save you money if you are not entitled to free prescriptions, but need regular medicines or treatments each month.

Everyone aged 60 years old and over automatically gets free prescriptions. All you need to do is to tick the relevant box on the back of the prescription, and complete and sign the declaration in the space provided, before handing it over the counter at the pharmacy.

If you are in receipt of certain benefits you may also be entitled to free prescriptions. For further information, visit our section on [Help with health costs](#).

RVS Good Neighbours Service

If you need some help with collecting your prescription, the [Royal Voluntary Service Good Neighbours Service](#) can offer practical help with small chores and tasks e.g. picking up prescriptions and help with shopping.

If you are housebound

Some pharmacies will deliver your prescription to you if you are housebound. Ask your pharmacist if they can do this and whether or not there will be a charge.

Complaining about your pharmacy

If you have a complaint about a pharmacist, or the owner of a pharmacy, you should first take up the complaint with your pharmacist who may be able to resolve the matter informally.

If your complaint cannot be dealt with in this way, your pharmacy will have a Complaints Procedure which will include providing you with a written account of your complaint and a deadline for responding to it. Your pharmacist will also give you the contact details of the appropriate Primary Care Services Agency.

General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the independent regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy premises in Great Britain. You can contact them to make a complaint.

For more information please visit the Information Now article on [Having Your Say About Health Services](#).

Other Useful Organisations

- **NHS 111** is the new telephone service which has replaced NHS Direct. You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is a fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time.
- **NHS.UK** is a website providing health and medicines information and you can search for local services.
- **Medicines Information Patient Helpline** is a dedicated Medicines Information Helpline for the patients of the Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. It is run by their Medicines Information pharmacists and aims to answer any questions or concerns you may have about your medicines.

Please note – The content on this website is provided for general information only, and should not be treated as a substitute for the medical advice of your own doctor or any other health care professional. If you are feeling unwell, make an appointment to see your GP or contact [NHS 111](#). In an emergency, dial **999**.

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Useful Organisations

General Pharmaceutical Council

Email: info@pharmacyregulation.org

Website: www.pharmacyregulation.org

Telephone: 0203 713 8000

Address: 25 Canada Square, E14 5LQ

NHS

Website: www.nhs.uk

Telephone: 0203 713 8000

NHS 111

Website: www.nhs.uk/111

Telephone: 0203 713 8000

Medicines Information Patient Helpline

Email: drug.information@nuth.nhs.uk

Website: http://www.newcastle-hospitals.org.uk/services/pharmacy_medicines-information-patient-helpline.aspx

Telephone: 0203 713 8000

Citylife Line

Website: <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/public-health-wellbeing-and-leisure/public-health-services/coronavirus-covid-19/citylife>

Telephone: 0800 170 7001

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