

Self Care Briefing – Diarrhoea (Adults)

Rationale

- Diarrhoea normally affects most people from time to time and is usually nothing to worry about. However, it can take a few days to a week to clear up.
- Acute diarrhoea is usually caused by a bacterial or viral infection and other causes include drugs, anxiety or a food allergy.
- OTC treatments can help replace lost fluids or reduce bowel motions. **This recommendation does not apply to children.**

Recommendations for clinicians

- Provide the patient with a 'non-prescription' sheet or a patient information leaflet to promote education about minor conditions suitable for self-care when appropriate.
- Advise patients of safe and effective self-care measures:
 - Stay at home and get plenty of rest
 - Drink lots of fluids, such as water and squash – take small sips if they feel sick
- Advise patients to seek medical attention and consider treatment with a prescription in the following circumstances:
 - If vomiting continues for more than 2 days and patient is unable to keep fluid down
 - Dehydration despite using oral rehydration sachets
 - Bloody diarrhoea or rectal bleeding
 - Diarrhoea that lasts for more than 7 days
 - Unintentional and unexplained weight loss

Example of OTC products available to buy*	Antidiarrhoeals (not for diarrhoea due to infection)	Loperamide hydrochloride - Not licensed for under 12 years (99p-£4.00 for 6 capsules) Bismuth subsalicylate suspension e.g. Pepto-bismol® - Not licensed for under 16 years (£3.00-£4.00 for 120ml) Bismuth subsalicylate (tablet) - Not licensed for under 16 years (~£6.50 for 24 tablets)
	Oral Rehydration	Dioralyte oral powder sachets - Not licensed under the age of 1 years (£3.00-£4.00 for 6 sachets) Dioralyte Relief oral powder sachets - Not licensed under the age of 1 years (~£4.25 for 6 sachets)

For further information see Self-care forum <http://www.selfcareforum.org/>, NHS UK <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/>, Patient UK <https://patient.info/>

*Prices correct at time of writing and are subject to change

