



Department
of Health &
Social Care



From the Deputy Chief Medical Officer and Chief Pharmaceutical Officer

CEM/CMO/2024/002

2 May 2024

Influenza season 2023/24: ending the prescribing and supply of antiviral medicines in primary care

The most recent surveillance data from UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) indicates that circulation of influenza in the community has returned to baseline levels.

In accordance with NICE guidance and Schedule 2 to the National Health Service (General Medical Services Contracts) (Prescription of drugs etc.) Regulations 2004, commonly known as the Grey List or Selected List Scheme (SLS):

- GPs and other prescribers working in primary care should no longer prescribe antiviral medicines (including neuraminidase inhibitors) for the prophylaxis and treatment of influenza on an FP10 prescription form.
- Community pharmacists should no longer supply antiviral medicines in primary care on presentation of an FP10 prescription form.

This advice stands until we write again to re-commence prescribing and supply of antiviral medicines in primary care. **This does not impact on prescribing of antiviral medicines in hospitals, which can continue as normal. The arrangements for prescribing antiviral medicines for localised community outbreaks of influenza during the 'out of season' period are set out below.**

NHS England wrote to Clinical Commissioning Groups (now known as Integrated Care Boards (ICBs)) in June 2017 to clarify arrangements for prescribing antiviral medicines when there are localised community outbreaks of influenza during the out of season period, in line with NICE Technology Appraisals (TA158 and 168). This letter reminds ICBs that responding to localised outbreaks falls outside GMS essential services and therefore ICBs will need to commission appropriate services to respond to such outbreaks by assessing exposed persons for treatment or prophylaxis and completing a patient specific direction for this purpose. This response may be required both inside and outside normal working hours. System level requirements for localised community outbreaks can be found [online](#).

Thank you for all your work during the 2023/24 winter.

Professor Thomas Waite
Deputy Chief Medical Officer for
England

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Chief Pharmaceutical Officer for England

Further information:

- NICE guidance on the use of antiviral medicines can be accessed at: <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/TA168> for treatment, and <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/TA158> for prophylaxis.
- UKHSA guidance on antiviral treatment and prophylaxis can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/influenza-treatment-and-prophylaxis-using-anti-viral-agents
- UKHSA's latest influenza surveillance reports can be found at www.gov.uk/government/collections/weekly-national-flu-reports

Communication:

Integrated Commissioning Boards are asked to note actions to facilitate the NHS response to out-of-season outbreaks. Additional guidance for this can be found at:

- www.england.nhs.uk/publication/localised-community-outbreaks-of-influenza-in-the-out-of-season-period/
- www.england.nhs.uk/primary-care-resources/influenza-out-of-season-faqs/

The alert has also been sent to:

- NHS Trusts (England) - Chief Executive
- NHS Trusts (England) - Medical Director
- NHS Foundation Trusts (England) - Chief Executive
- NHS Foundation Trusts (England) - Medical Director
- NHS Regional Offices
- GP Practices
- Community Pharmacy and Primary Care Networks
- NHS111
- Consultants in communicable diseases
- CMO Urgent Messages – Recipients on public health link
- CMO Urgent Messages – Non-NHS Recipients on public health link
- UK CMOs in Ireland, Scotland and Wales
- Integrated Care Boards
- Social Care Providers

NHS England and UK Health Security Agency will assist with cascading information to appropriate professional groups.