



A self help health guide for Shetland residents

Why do I need a self help guide?

This guide provides advice on self-care management for several conditions. It is not intended to replace GP appointments but it is intended as an aid for patients if they catch a cold or a similar minor illness. Many minor illnesses can be safely treated using “over the counter medication” (this term is used for remedies that can be bought in Pharmacies, without the need for a prescription) and as well as using this guide, patients are encouraged to use the services of the local Pharmacies. These are:

- Boots, Commercial Street, Lerwick
- A L Laing, Freefield, Lerwick
- A L Laing, Commercial Street, Lerwick
- Norsepharm, Main Street, Scalloway
- Deltingpharm, Brae Health Centre, Brae

As well as giving advice and information about prescribed medicines, the community pharmacy (chemist) is a good place to go for advice and treatment of minor ailments. Pharmacies offer a range of services, including the Minor Ailments Scheme and the Chronic Medication Scheme.

The Minor Ailments service is available to children, elderly, people on benefits and those with a medical exemption certificate. You need to register for this service at one of the Pharmacies before advice and appropriate medicines can be supplied.

The Chronic Medication Service is also available from all Shetland Pharmacies and is available for most people with chronic medical conditions. This service allows the pharmacist to discuss how you are getting on with your medicines with you and provide any help you require. The service may also be able to provide you with a prescription which lasts for up to six months

and can be collected directly from the pharmacy. You need to register with one of the pharmacies in order to be able to use this service.

Inside this leaflet you will find a small green pharmacy card. This is a reference card with Pharmacy opening times and should be used in conjunction with the self help guide.

As well as this guide, you can also access advice through the following:

NHS24

Know Who To Turn To -

<http://www.shb.scot.nhs.uk/hospital/kwttt.asp>

First Aid for soft tissue injuries (including bruises)

Soft tissue injuries are very common. They include sprains (ligament injury), strains (muscle/tendon injury) and bruises (contusions). Following the guidelines below will help to reduce the damage and help recovery. How you approach your injury and follow the basic principles of soft tissue injury care can significantly influence the severity of the damage and your rate of recovery.

Soft tissue trauma causes tissue swelling, internal bleeding, pain and loss of movement. There may be associated loss of muscle power and function. Adhering to the following guidelines for all soft tissue injuries will help to minimise these effects and promote recovery.

Immediate Care (first 48 hours)

- P** Protect from further injury
- R** Rest for the injured part
- I** Ice for the injured part
- C** Compress the injured part
- E** Elevate the injured part
- R** Rehabilitate the injured part and associated areas—starting to gently use the injured part and building back up to full strength

- H** Heat should not be used in the first 48 hours (no hot baths)
- A** Alcohol should be avoided as it causes increased bleeding – slowing healing
- R** Running and rapid activities should stop as it may cause more damage
- M** Massage should be avoided in the first 48 hours

It is important to prevent further damage by protecting the injured area and this may also reduce pain. This can take the form of strapping to reduce movement, wearing a splint or sling and even using crutches to take the weight off the area. The amount of protection will be determined by pain and the severity of the injury. Relative rest is important by avoiding further stress and you should try to avoid pain or pressure on the injured part.

Ice

Do not use ice if you have a circulatory problem or impaired sensation. The swelling and bleeding that follows injury, as well as the pain, can be reduced by the correct application of cold therapy to the injured area. Crushed ice in a damp towel or plastic bag - a little oil applied to the skin prevents the possibility of an ice burn. Ice packs should cover the area as fully as possible and be applied for 15 – 20 minutes every 2 hours for the first 48 hours. If ice is not available immerse the injured area in cold water for 15 – 20 minutes and repeat every 2 hours. You can use a bag of frozen peas but you must ensure this is well wrapped in a towel to prevent the possibility of an ice burn.

A simple painkiller such as paracetamol will also help relieve pain.

BACK PAIN

Back pain is a very common occurrence and most people will experience it at some time in their lives.

Prevention of back pain:-

- Maintain good posture at all times when sitting, standing, working and sleeping.
- Watch your weight as being overweight for your height and gender puts extra strain on your spine.
- Keep fit and active as strong stomach and back muscles help support your spine.
- Consider your everyday activities – think of your back when working, especially when lifting, gardening, driving or shopping.
- Know your capabilities – do not over do it when carrying out heavy activities or when playing sport

Lift wisely – do not lift anything that is too heavy and use the correct lifting techniques:- bend your knees, get down to the object, bring the object close to your body, take a good grip, use your legs to take the strain of lifting.

Self-referral to NHS Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy treats a range of conditions such as back pain, neck pain, as well as soft tissue, joint and muscle problems. In most cases specialised exercises are advised by a physiotherapist to treat the problem, allowing the patient to manage their condition themselves. Physiotherapy can be particularly useful in conditions that are persistent or reoccur, however if your problem requires urgent attention, is severe or is worsening, please seek more urgent medical attention (e.g. GP, NHS 24).

If you would like to refer yourself (**over 16s only**) – you do not need to see your GP first - you simply pick up a form from your local health centre, pharmacy or library, or download one from the NHS Shetland website www.shb.scot.nhs.uk . Your completed form should be returned to the physiotherapy department at the Gilbert Bain Hospital. A senior physiotherapist will assess your information to see if an appointment is appropriate.

Benefits of the scheme include:

- You don't have to wait to see your GP
- You are half as likely to be off work for more than one month if you self refer instead of being referred by your GP.
- Evidence shows early intervention reduces recurrence in the following years by up to 40%.
- Self-referral does not increase demand for physiotherapy

The NHS Inform website (www.nhsinform.co.uk/msk) is also a useful reference for advice on self treating minor sprains, strains and injuries. However, you should always seek professional help if you feel the problem is more serious.

Self Management of Acute Low Back Pain

If you suffer a sudden onset of low back pain, the following will help settle the pain and promote recovery.

- Stop all vigorous activities
- Do not lift
- Use good posture at all times
- Only sit for short periods, 15 minutes, and only in good posture
- When sitting use a cushion or small pillow to support your back
- Vary your position frequently between standing, sitting and lying
- Lie on a flat, firm, but not hard surface
- Vary your lying positions, back, side and at times on your front
- A pillow under your knees will ease tension when on your back
- A pillow between your knees will ease tension when on your side
- Vary between lying and walking / sitting frequently

Simple pain relief and relaxation can be achieved by using a hot water bottle. This should be filled with hand hot water and wrapped in a towel. It can be used for 15 minutes every 1 to 2 hours. You will find that most low back pain eases in 1 to 2 days and is resolved in 1 to 2 weeks. If this does not happen then make an appointment to see your GP. **If you have very severe pain in the back or legs, are unable to straighten up or have significant other symptoms associated with your back, you should consult your GP.**

ATHLETES FOOT

Athlete's foot is a common fungal infection of the foot. An itchy red rash develops in the spaces between your toes and the affected skin may also be scaly, flaky and dry. Speak to your Pharmacist to get cream for your feet and powder for your shoes.

BURNS AND SCALDS

Apply large quantities of cold water until the pain subsides, this may take up to 15 minutes. The skin may become blistered. Do not burst blisters, but keep the skin clean and dry. If the injury is more than a few inches across you should seek advice either through NHS24 or A&E.

CHICKENPOX

This is a common childhood illness. The rash starts on the body and face as red blotches, in which develop small fluid filled blisters. The blisters turn to scabs and drop off after about a week. Paracetamol or paracetamol fever and discomfort and you can get chlorpheniramine oral solution from the Pharmacy to help with the itch. Patients are no longer infectious once the last spots are dry and scab-like but please check local school attendance policy if your child has had chickenpox.

COLDS AND COUGHS

Unfortunately there is still no cure for the common cold, although it tends to be a short illness, albeit uncomfortable. Antibiotics are not effective against the viruses that cause the illness and may themselves lead to troublesome side effects. You will feel more comfortable if you rest, drink plenty of fluids and take paracetamol regularly (within recommended limits). A cough linctus from your pharmacy will help and steamy inhalations are soothing, particularly if you are very congested. You should consult your doctor if you are not improving after seven days, if you are short of breath, have chest pain or if your cough produces a lot of phlegm or blood.

CONJUNCTIVITIS

This is not unusual, especially in children. It is due to a superficial infection in the eye. It causes pinkness and a feeling of grittiness, together with a yellow discharge. Infected eyes are often sticky in the mornings, you should clean any discharge away with moist cotton wool. Treatment may require a course of antibiotic drops from the pharmacy, but usually settles after a few days on its own. Avoid sharing towels as this could spread infection.

CUTS AND GRAZES / BLEEDING

Wash the area thoroughly with antiseptic solution. To stop bleeding, apply pressure for five to ten minutes with a clean cloth. Bring the edges of the cut together and apply a plaster dressing. Keep it dry for one or two days. If the cut is deep and the edges cannot be pulled together, it may need to be stitched. Consult the hospital casualty department. A tetanus booster may be needed if you have not had one for more than ten years.

CYSTITIS

This is a urine infection and is common, particularly in women. It usually causes a burning pain when passing urine. You should drink plenty of fluids and take paracetamol. If you are unwell, have a fever, or your symptoms do not settle within 24 hours, you should consult your doctor

DIARRHOEA AND VOMITING

Diarrhoea in adults is unpleasant but rarely dangerous. Many attacks are caused by viruses and start to get better within 48 hours. Diarrhoea is often accompanied by cramp like tummy pain and may be preceded by vomiting. It is best to drink lots of water or water based drinks such as squash. Paracetamol will help the pain and fever. You should consult your doctor only if your symptoms do not improve over the next few days, if the tummy pain is continuous or if you have recently been abroad.

Diarrhoea in children and babies should be monitored carefully, but needs similar treatment. Milk and solid food is best avoided initially and lots of water based drinks should be encouraged, little and often. Paracetamol syrup will ease discomfort. Special drinks can be bought from Pharmacies, (Dioralyte/Rehidrat)

DRINK BETTER

Many people are able to keep their drinking within the recommended limits of alcohol consumption, so their risk of alcohol-related health problems is low. However, for some, the amount of alcohol they drink could put them at risk of damaging their health. The recommended daily limits for drinking alcohol are:

No more than 3 to 4 units a day for men;
No more than 2 to 3 units a day for women

You can find more information about drinking alcohol safely at:

<http://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/alcohol-information/drinking-too-much/>

EARACHE

Earache may be due to excess wax, catarrh or infection. Children are particularly prone to ear infections which often develop during colds. A child with earache should be given paracetamol syrup for their pain and a well-padded warm hot water bottle held against the ear will also help. Antibiotics are not always necessary, as these do not help a child's immediate distress and are usually not given unless the pain has lasted more than 48 – 72 hours. If there is discharge present, or the earache persists, issue appropriate pain killing medication and make an appointment for your child to be seen by a GP or Advanced Nurse Practitioner.

EYE PROBLEMS

The majority of eye problems can now be seen and treated by your local Optometrist, rather than your GP or A&E.

These include:

- Red eye
- painful eye
- sudden loss of vision
- double vision
- sudden flashes & floaters
- eye complications post op
- Foreign body removal

You should see your Optometrist as your first port of call. This will ensure you will be seen promptly and receive the right specialist care as soon as possible.

If you have an eye problem, you can make an emergency appointment with an Optometrist. You do not need to be registered with an Optician, these appointments are provided free of charge by the NHS.

Optometrists have the same specialist equipment as eye doctors (hospital Ophthalmologists). Shetland Optometrists have close links with the eye specialists in Aberdeen, Shetland GP's and A&E, and can liaise with them to treat and manage your condition. They can also refer you to the hospital eye clinic if necessary.

FEVERISH CHILDREN

A child develops a temperature in response to an infection, often a virus such as a cold. Your child will feel hot and appear unwell. They should be encouraged to rest, drink plenty and you should give them paracetamol syrup regularly. Do not worry if they do not want to eat. You should not overheat a child with a temperature and they should be nursed in a warm room with light clothing and covers. If your child is extremely hot to the touch, sponge the child down with lukewarm water and pad dry with a towel as this quickly helps to reduce the child's temperature. The temperature may settle quickly but if you are worried you should consult your doctor or nurse. **Please note that if your child needs to be seen, you will not harm him/her by bringing him to the surgery in a pram or car.**

'FLU (INFLUENZA)

'Flu' is a common infection due to a virus. It causes a fever and you will feel hot and cold, weak and ache in muscles and joints. There may be a sore throat, headache and "cold like" symptoms. Antibiotics do not cure 'flu'. It is best to rest, drink plenty of fluid (not alcohol) and take regular paracetamol (unless you have a known allergy). Most people begin to recover over a week or ten days. Some people are particularly vulnerable to 'flu', especially the elderly, and those with heart, kidney, chest disease or diabetes they should consider a 'Flu' vaccination in the autumn.

GERMAN MEASLES (RUBELLA)

This is a viral illness that causes a pale pink rash that covers the body. The child usually feels only a little unwell and may occasionally have aching joints. The only danger is to unborn babies in the first few months of pregnancy. Most pregnant women have been immunised in childhood against German Measles and this protects their baby. It is sensible however, to let visitors know if German Measles is in the household. If you are pregnant, are not sure if you have been immunised and think

you may have been in contact with German Measles, you should discuss it with your doctor or nurse.

HAY FEVER

This can be troublesome when the pollen count is high. Itchy eyes, sneezing and a runny nose can be helped by antihistamine tablets, which are available without prescription from your pharmacy. If symptoms are persistent, consult your doctor or nurse.

HEAD LICE

These are a very frequent problem, especially amongst children. They prefer clean hair and **are not a sign of poor personal hygiene**. Combing of wet hair using a nit comb will remove the lice. This needs to be repeated after 1 week. Combs are available from the Pharmacy under the Minor Ailments Scheme.

INSECT STINGS

These are painful but not usually serious. A cold compress will reduce swelling, calamine lotion will soothe and paracetamol will help with pain. The occasional person will react badly to insect stings and in these cases it is wise to contact your doctor or nurse.

MEASLES

This is now much less common than in the past, as a result of widespread immunisation. Children should be immunised (MMR) when they are 12-13 months old and again with their pre-school booster.

Children are very unwell, with cold symptoms and a fever. The red, blotchy rash appears after three or four days, initially on the chest and back and may also be in the mouth. Treatment is rest, lots to drink and paracetamol mixture. If your child is particularly unwell, consult your doctor or nurse.

MENTAL HEALTH

Sometimes our thoughts and feelings can overwhelm us to the point where it becomes difficult to cope with everyday life events. The links in this section provide information aimed to help you cope better and hopefully begin to overcome the difficulties you are experiencing.

One of the most common mental health issues is depression. Being depressed is more than just feeling sad or having a low mood. It is not a condition where people can just 'pull themselves together' and get on with things. A clinical depression is one that lasts for at least two weeks and affects the person's emotions, thinking and behaviour.

If you are worried about your mental health please make an appointment to see your GP. You may also find the following information helpful:

Phone-lines:

Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87

Hopeline UK: 0800 068 41 41

Living Life: 0800 328 9655

Samaritans: 01595 694449 or 08457 90 90 90

Supportline: 01708 765 200

Websites:

Mind Your Head: www.mindyourhead.org.uk/depression

Samaritans: www.samaritans.org

Breathing Space:

www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk/bspace/173.51.71.html

MUMPS

This causes swelling of the glands just below and in front of the ears, making the face look puffed out. Patients are infectious for 10 days from the onset of swelling. They may not be particularly unwell but plenty to drink and paracetamol will ease discomfort. Teenage and men can sometimes experience testicular pain if they have mumps and if this happens, you should contact your GP for advice.

NAPPY RASH

Most babies on occasions suffer nappy rash. It develops as red blotches on the baby's bottom, which can become angry and sore. Nappy rash is best prevented by frequent nappy changes and using a barrier cream such as zinc and castor oil with every change. If the rash does not heal quickly, you should consult your health visitor or nurse. Your local Pharmacist will also be able to give you advice and help.

SEXUAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING CLINIC

This clinic is held every Monday, from 1830-2030 in the Outpatient Department, Gilbert Bain Hospital, Lerwick. The clinic is open to all – there is no appointment necessary for the following services:

- Information and advice
- Screening, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections
- Pregnancy testing
- Free condoms
- Partner notification
- HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C testing
- Emergency Contraception

Emergency Contraception is also available from

1. Accident & Emergency
2. GP Surgeries, (any - not just your own practice)
3. GP out of hours clinic - every Saturday 10am-12noon in the Outpatient Department of the Gilbert Bain Hospital
4. Community Pharmacies

You will need to make an appointment at the Sexual Health Clinic for fitting and removal of contraceptive implants and coils

To make or cancel an appointment call in at the clinic or phone 01595 74 3000 during clinic times and ask to be put through to the Sexual Health Clinic.

SORE THROAT

Most sore throats are due to viruses and do not respond to antibiotics. Usually sore throats will begin to improve over four or five days. In adults soluble aspirin gargled, then swallowed regularly, together with drinking plenty of fluids such as squash, will help. Advice on other medicines to help with symptoms can be obtained from the local pharmacy. If your sore throat is getting progressively worse after 72 hours or 3 or more of the following 4 symptoms are present, it is wise to see your doctor:

1. Pus on tonsils
2. Fever (high temperature)
3. Neck glands enlarged
4. Absence of cough

STOPPING SMOKING

It is never too late to stop smoking. Even people who have smoked all their lives will improve their health by stopping smoking. Stopping smoking is a difficult thing to do. One of the main reasons is because of nicotine. Nicotine is the highly addictive drug in cigarettes and it is this addictive nature that makes it difficult to quit. When you quit smoking your body no longer gets the nicotine it has become used to and you may suffer withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms may include feeling irritable, difficulty in concentrating, developing a cough, sleep disruption and headaches. To quit smoking successfully you need to be strongly motivated and really want to be a non smoker. Nicotine Replacement Therapy, Zyban or Chmapix can help take the edge off the withdrawals from nicotine. One to one support will also help you in your attempt to give up smoking. Stopping smoking can be made easier with NRT/Zyban /Champix and support, but your determination, effort and commitment are vital.

Support with quitting is available at your local Pharmacy, Health Centre and through NHS Shetland Health Improvement Team. All can provide you with a 12-week support programme and medication (if this is required). There is also a drop-in service available very Wednesday at the Gilbert Bain Hospital Outpatients Department between 6-7pm, please pop in anytime before 7 and you will be seen on a first come first seen basis.

For more Information or to speak to a smoking cessation advisor, please telephone the Health improvement Department on 01595 807494

Other national resources: www.canstopsmoking.com or smokeline 0800 84 84 84 (8am-10pm)

THREADWORMS

These are tiny, white, thread-like worms, which live in the bowel. They particularly affect children and they can be a nuisance, but are not harmful. They often cause itching around the back passage, especially at night and sometimes can be seen in the motion. Threadworms can be easily treated with medicines available from a community pharmacist (chemist). You should treat all members of the household and everyone should be careful to wash their hands properly after going to the toilet.

THRUSH

This is an infection, which affects many women at some time in their lives. It is more common in women who are pregnant, on the pill, diabetic, or on antibiotics. Some women suffer repeated attacks. It causes intense itching and a thick white vaginal discharge. There may be soreness and pain on passing urine. Thrush is caused by a yeast infection and will usually respond rapidly to cream or pessaries, which are available from a pharmacy or your doctor. Avoiding tights, nylon underwear and close fitting jeans can reduce the likelihood of repeated attacks.

TOOTHACHE

Take regular painkillers such as paracetamol and consult your dentist promptly. There is an Out of Hours Dental Emergency Service if you experience dental problems out with normal working hours and this can be accessed through NHS24.

WARTS / VERRUCAE

These are due to raised, thickened skin caused by a virus. They are common on the hands and feet. Warts will eventually get better without treatment as the body fights off the virus. For troublesome warts, various paints and applications are available from pharmacies, which must be used regularly and often for some considerable time according to the instructions, if they are to be effective.

Some tips for getting the best from your appointment

1. Keep your appointment. If you no longer require your appointment, please cancel it with as much notice as possible as this means someone else can be offered the appointment. Some Health Centres and Dental Practices offer a text message reminder service; all you have to do is sign a form consenting to your mobile phone being used to receive reminders.
2. Think about what you are going to say. Your clinician will want to know how long you have had the illness and when it began to get worse. Your clinician will also need to know what medicines you have been taking (for example, cough medicine, herbal remedies or decongestant).
3. If you think that your illness is linked to earlier illness or similar bouts of the same condition, tell your clinician. If you think you know what is causing it then please tell that to the clinician as well.
4. Clinicians try very hard to keep to allotted appointment times. However, if someone comes in and they have complex needs, the clinician needs to deal with these needs and that can mean that the appointment takes longer than normal. This, of course, means that you may have to wait past your appointment time before you are seen. Please understand that the clinicians will see you as soon as possible and that they are not intentionally running late.
5. In Health Centres who employ Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANP), the ANP will see patients who present with a range of ailments such as chest infections, sore throats, earache, minor skin conditions etc. The ANP will be happy to see you if this is a new presentation and is not linked to an existing complex medical condition.
6. Please also remember that you can take a friend, family member or carer with you to an appointment if you want to.

This leaflet is available in other languages and formats,
including Braille, from

Corporate Services
NHS Shetland
Montfield Headquarters
Burgh Road
LERWICK
01595 74 3064

Date produced: April 2014
Review date: April 2016