

# COLD & FLU

CONSULTATION PATHWAY  
FOR COMMUNITY PHARMACY



the PHARMACEUTICAL JOURNAL

**ROYAL  
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This resource is designed to help members of the pharmacy team deliver consistent care when engaging in cold and flu consultations and will allow team members to:

- Advise patients on appropriate self care for cold and flu symptoms;
- Discuss appropriateness of antimicrobials in cold and flu management;
- Deliver important cold and flu and public health messages to patients;
- Share advice with patients who are experiencing symptoms of cold or flu, including:
  - Expected duration of symptoms with or without management;
  - Steps to take if symptoms worsen or do not improve;
  - What to do if adverse effects from treatment are experienced;
  - When to ask for advice or seek medical attention.
- Raise awareness of community pharmacy as an easily accessible first point of contact;
- Signpost patients to advice and information about self care.



## THE PHARMACY TEAM

All members of the pharmacy team have a responsibility to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to provide a consistently high standard of care to patients experiencing cold and flu symptoms.

All members of the pharmacy team should be able to effectively engage in a cold and flu consultation with patients or their carers.

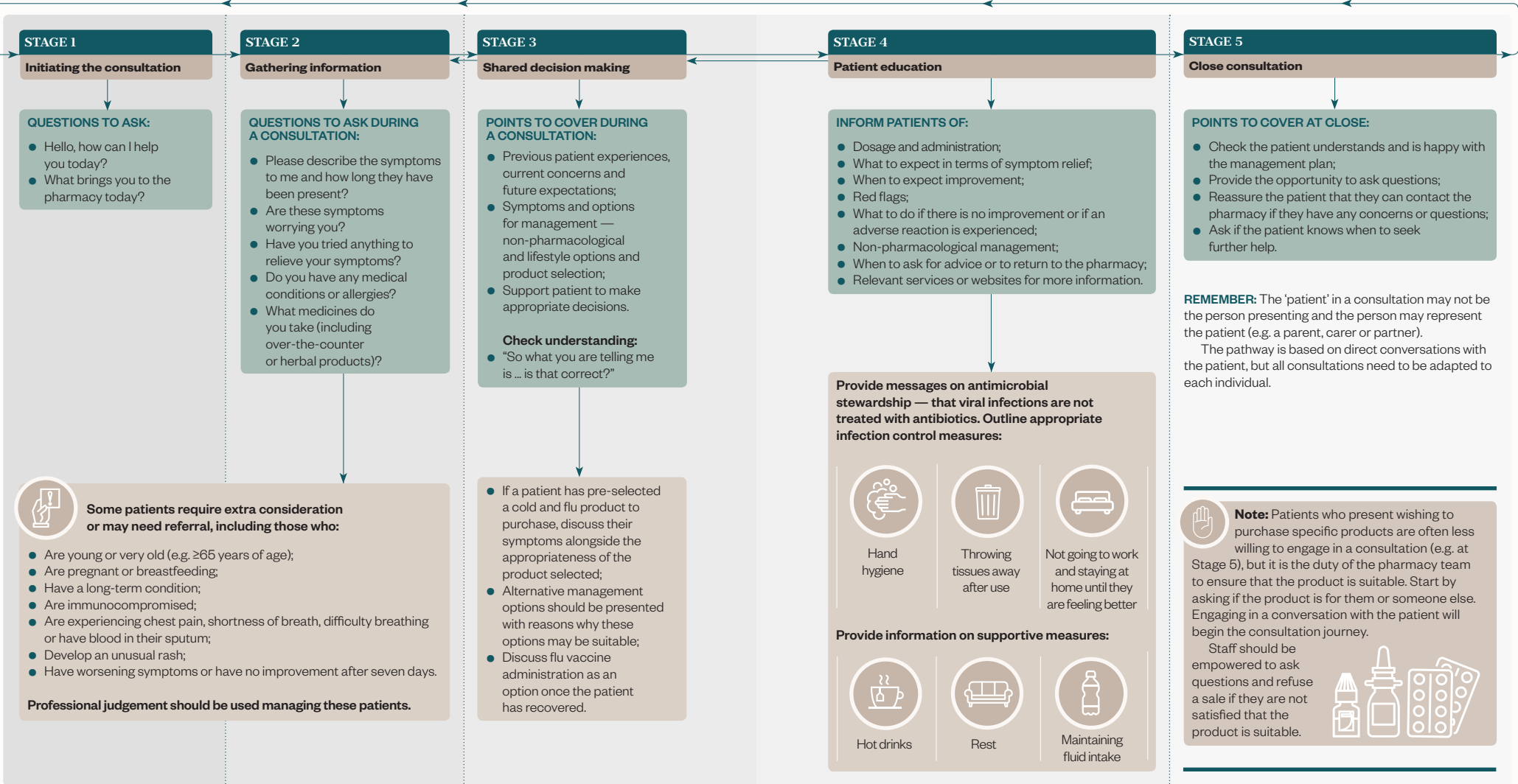


# COLD AND FLU CONSULTATION PATHWAY

Consultation theory

- Develop rapport ;
- Ask questions to identify the issue;
- Listen and confirm what the patient is telling you.
- Gather information related to the patient's problem;
- Assess their ideas, concerns and expectations.
- Put patients at the centre of decisions about their own care.
- Provide patients with details regarding the next steps for their management, including self-care and public health messages.
- Check that the patient is happy with the agreed management and treatment plan.

Applying to practice



Cold- and flu-specific considerations

**Some patients require extra consideration or may need referral, including those who:**

- Are young or very old (e.g. ≥65 years of age);
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding;
- Have a long-term condition;
- Are immunocompromised;
- Are experiencing chest pain, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing or have blood in their sputum;
- Develop an unusual rash;
- Have worsening symptoms or have no improvement after seven days.

**Professional judgement should be used managing these patients.**

**REMEMBER:** The 'patient' in a consultation may not be the person presenting and the person may represent the patient (e.g. a parent, carer or partner).

The pathway is based on direct conversations with the patient, but all consultations need to be adapted to each individual.

**Note:** Patients who present wishing to purchase specific products are often less willing to engage in a consultation (e.g. at Stage 5), but it is the duty of the pharmacy team to ensure that the product is suitable. Start by asking if the product is for them or someone else. Engaging in a conversation with the patient will begin the consultation journey.

Staff should be empowered to ask questions and refuse a sale if they are not satisfied that the product is suitable.

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## TECHNIQUES FOR GATHERING INFORMATION

By asking the right questions, you can further explore a patient's problem or symptoms and understand their ideas, concerns, expectations and how the problem is affecting their quality of life.

Many pharmacy teams use the **WWHAM (Who? What? How? Action? Medicines?)** questioning approach to gather information, but patients may think the scripted nature of these questions feels like an interview and is and potentially intrusive — especially if it takes place at the pharmacy counter.

The TED and ICE principles are alternative methods that can be used to invite the patient to share information:

- T** Can you **TELL** me why you have come to the pharmacy today?
- E** Can you **EXPLAIN** who the medicine is for and what the problem is?
- D** Can you **DESCRIBE** your symptoms to me and how long you have had these?
  
- I** Do you have any **IDEAS** about what may be causing your symptoms?
- C** Is there anything that is of **CONCERN** to you?
- E** What were your **EXPECTATIONS** from your visit to the pharmacy?



### EXPLAINING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENERAL SALES LIST, PHARMACY MEDICINES AND PRESCRIPTION-ONLY MEDICINES

Patients may not understand the differences between general sales list (GSL), pharmacy (P) medicines and prescription-only medicines (POMs).

Pharmacy teams should be able to provide a simple and clear explanation of the main differences, for example:

- **GSL medicines** are available from retail outlets and pharmacies;
- **P medicines** are medicines that can only be sold under supervision of a pharmacist and are only available from the pharmacy counter. These tend to be stronger medicines, contain unique ingredients, and/or come in larger pack sizes;
- **POMs** are medicines that are prescribed and cannot be purchased over the counter.

Consistent messaging around cold and flu and antimicrobial stewardship should be delivered to the public. Signposting patients to written and electronic sources of information is recommended.

Pharmacy teams can read the resources listed below with patients at the pharmacy counter or signpost them to read or refer to when convenient:

- **NHS website**  
<https://www.nhs.uk/>
  
- **NHS 'Stay well this winter' campaign**  
<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/34-stay-well-this-winter-/resources>
  
- **NHS 111**  
<https://111.nhs.uk/>
  
- **Public Health England 'Treating your respiratory tract infection'**  
<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/34/resources/4171>
  
- **Public Health England 'Antibiotic guardian' campaign**  
<http://linkis.com/antibioticguardian.com/YvqCn>



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