

Treat Yourself Better with Pharmacist Advice: campaign spokespeople quotes

1. Gopa Mitra, Director of Health Policy & Public Affairs, PAGB

“*Treat Yourself Better with Pharmacist Advice* aims to encourage people to visit their pharmacist as a first port of call to seek advice on treating winter ailments, such as a cough, cold, sore throat, flu, nasal congestion, or ear infection. With increasing pressures on the NHS and in light of the recent concerns regarding the rising rates of unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions, pharmacists can play a key role in providing expert advice on how people can self-treat winter ailments with the use of over-the-counter medications, as opposed to going to their GP for antibiotics which won’t work.”

2. Robert Darracott, Chief Executive, Pharmacy Voice

“With at least five years of experience to qualify and a wealth of knowledge about how best to treat winter symptoms, pharmacists are best placed to provide people with personalised advice for how they can self-treat their cold and flu symptoms. We are pleased to be launching *Treat Yourself Better with Pharmacist Advice* in conjunction with PAGB, through which we hope individuals will be encouraged to learn more about normal symptom duration for common winter ailments and what they can do to relieve their symptoms with help from their local pharmacist.”

3. Dr Michael Dixon, Chief Executive, NHS Alliance and Chair, College of Medicine

“With recent figures from the Longitudinal Prize Survey revealing that nearly half of GPs admit to prescribing ‘useless’ antibiotics just to get pushy patients to leave their surgeries, antibiotic resistance is becoming an ever increasing threat that needs to be tackled. One of the barriers is that people might not understand that antibiotics will not treat these viral infections and therefore frequently visit their GP when suffering from winter symptoms with the hope of being prescribed antibiotics. I wholeheartedly support *Treat Yourself Better with Pharmacist Advice* as it encourages the population to better self-manage their symptoms and educates people not to take antibiotics unnecessarily.”

4. Professor Mark Baker, Director of the Centre for Clinical Practice, NICE

“Respiratory tract infections are infections of the throat, sinuses, airways or lungs and are responsible for 60% of antibiotic prescribing in general practice. It’s important for healthcare professionals to be aware of NICE guidance on upper respiratory tract infections which highlights how long patients can expect symptoms to last for and the ‘red flags’ or warning signs which indicates when further medical advice is needed. *Treat Yourself Better with Pharmacist* is aligned to our guidance and advises people to seek advice from their pharmacist as a first port of call when suffering from winter symptoms.”

5. John Watson, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health

“Antibiotic overuse results in reduced efficacy, so it is critical that we don’t use them when we don’t need them so that they work when we do.”

6. Keith Ridge Chief Pharmaceutical Officer for NHS England

“Pharmacists can help people better manage winter ailments by providing effective medicines as well as guidance on self-care and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. They will advise people when it is necessary to visit the GP and what warning signs to look out for which may require medical attention, however in most cases this won’t be necessary, so I would urge people to speak to their local pharmacist before rushing to A&E or making a GP appointment.”

7. Dr Rob Hicks (GP)

“Far too many people are still visiting their GP unnecessarily when suffering with winter ailments such as cold and flu. People frequently underestimate the normal duration of symptoms and expect to be prescribed antibiotics, which are ineffective for viral infections such as cold and flu and therefore will not work. You can normally expect symptoms of a cold to last around 10 days and those of the flu to last around 2 weeks, during which time I suggest people speak to their pharmacist initially for advice on what treatment is best for them and visit the Treat Yourself Better with Pharmacist Advice website, www.treatyourselfbetter.co.uk, to learn more about how long you can usually expect symptoms to last for and for self-care advice.”

8. Raj Patel (Pharmacist)

“There are many things people can do to self-treat when suffering from winter ailments, such as a cold, cough or flu which your local pharmacist can help advise you on, instead of taking unnecessary antibiotics. It’s important to drink lots of fluids, get plenty of rest and take ibuprofen or paracetamol which can help to reduce a temperature and ease aches and pains when suffering from winter symptoms.

“Pharmacies provide a trusted source of health and wellbeing advice for all common winter ailments and are widely accessible. 96% of the population, even those living in the most deprived areas, can get to a pharmacy within 20 minutes by walking or using public transport.”

9. David Branford, Royal Pharmaceutical Society English Pharmacy Board Chair

“Pharmacists are in a unique position to provide expert advice on how to help people to treat themselves when they have a cough, cold or flu this winter. With over 11,500 community pharmacists in the UK, accessible high street locations and convenient opening times as well as an array of over the counter medicine, pharmacists are ideally placed to be the first point of call for all common ailments.”