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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of OTC products available to buy*</th>
<th>Antidiarrhoeals (not for diarrhoea due to infection)</th>
<th>Oral Rehydration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loperamide hydrochloride - Not licensed for under 12 years (99p-£4.00 for 6 capsules)</td>
<td>Dioralyte oral powder sachets - Not licensed under the age of 1 year (£3.00-£4.00 for 6 sachets)</td>
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<td>Bismuth subsalicylate suspension e.g. Pepto-bismol® - Not licensed for under 16 years (£3.00-£4.00 for 120ml)</td>
<td>Dioralyte Relief oral powder sachets - Not licensed under the age of 1 year (~£4.25 for 6 sachets)</td>
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<td>Bismuth subsalicylate (tablet) - Not licensed for under 16 years (~£6.50 for 24 tablets)</td>
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*Prices correct at time of writing and are subject to change.