

14th November 2013

Time to self care for life – Take control

Self Care Week 2013 takes place next week from 18th – 24th November. Self care not only empowers the individual, it also reduces demand on the NHS and this year's awareness week is aimed at encouraging people to 'Self care for life – take control'. The Self Care Forum has produced a number of resources to help organisations support the week and promote self care.

These include a series of fact sheets on Upper Respiratory Tract Infections (URTIs) designed to help clinicians and patients discuss issues around self care within the practice consultation. These explain what symptoms the patient can expect, how long they should last, what the patient can do to relieve them, as well as highlighting the more serious symptoms that indicate the patient should seek professional medical advice. Research has found that one of the main reasons that people give up on self care and seek the advice of a doctor too early is because they don't realise just how long the symptoms of ailments like coughs and colds can last for.

The Forum has also produced a medicine cabinet poster to put on display in patient waiting rooms. This explains that winter ailments such as coughs and colds are best treated at home and that antibiotics from the GP aren't needed. Again, it highlights how long the symptoms of URTIs should typically last for (middle ear infection: 4 days; sore throat: 1 week; cold: 1.5 weeks; sinusitis: 2.5 weeks; cough: 3 weeks).

According to new research from Doctors.net.uk¹ more than eight out of 10 GPs (86%) believe that people who come to see them over the winter months complaining of colds would do better to go and see a pharmacist instead. 99% of GPs say that they receive unnecessary visits to their surgery for colds in winter and this is estimated to cost the NHS £35.2 million a year, and on average an hour a day.

"Misuse of NHS resources and inappropriate use of antibiotics around common and relatively benign conditions is becoming a real public health issue", said Dr Peter Smith, Self Care Forum Board member and Vice President of the National Association of Primary Care (NAPC). "Many patients are surprised about how long the symptoms of cough and

other URTIs normally last for, particularly when their previous doctor gave a prescription for antibiotics rather than explaining that they are not necessary.”

All the resources mentioned and more can be downloaded from the Self Care Forum website at www.selfcareforum.org. The specific links to the materials mentioned are:

Fact sheets:

- Cough: <http://www.selfcareforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/7-Cough.pdf>
- Sore throat: <http://www.selfcareforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/10-Sore-Throat.pdf>
- Middle ear infection: <http://www.selfcareforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/20131030-SCF-Fact-Sheet-No-11-Otitis-Media-v1-final.pdf>
- Common cold: <http://www.selfcareforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/20131030-SCF-Fact-Sheet-No-12-Common-Cold-v1-final.pdf>
- Sinusitis: <http://www.selfcareforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/20131030-SCF-Fact-Sheet-No-13-Sinusitis-v1-final.pdf>

Medicine cabinet poster: <http://www.selfcareforum.org/2013/11/08/is-your-medicine-cabinet-fit-for-the-winter/>

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Self Care Forum

The Self Care Forum is a network of doctors, nurses, patient groups, NHS managers, pharmacists, the Department of Health, NHS England and the OTC medicines industry. The purpose of the Self Care Forum is to further the reach of self care and embed it into everyday life. **Visit the Self Care Forum website at: www.selfcareforum.org**

For further information please contact Marianne MacDonald or Laura Powers at selfcareforum@mashhealth.com

¹ Doctors.Net.UK Market Research carried out with 1,000 GPs, October 2013 on behalf of the Treat Yourself Better Without Antibiotics campaign