If you take several medicines, you may have wondered whether they are all still necessary, whether they work well together, or whether there is a simpler way to manage them. A structured medication review (SMR) is a planned conversation with a healthcare professional to look at your medicines and agree what is right for you.

It is not simply a quick check of your repeat prescription. The review should take account of your health, priorities and concerns, as well as the benefits and possible problems associated with each medicine. For eligible patients in England, an NHS SMR is free.

It is also important to distinguish an NHS structured medication review from other pharmacy services. Community pharmacies now offer support beyond dispensing, including NHS Pharmacy First consultations, vaccinations and travel health advice. These services can be useful, but they are not the same as an SMR.

What is a structured medication review?

An SMR is a comprehensive, personalised review of your medicines, carried out with you by an appropriately trained healthcare professional. In England, it is commonly arranged through a GP practice and may be led by a clinical pharmacist working in the practice team.

The aim is to make sure your medicines are appropriate, effective and as safe as possible. A review may cover prescription medicines, medicines bought over the counter, and vitamins or herbal products. It should also consider how your treatment fits into everyday life: for example, whether a medicine is difficult to take, causes side effects, or nhs health check 40 74 no longer reflects your preferences.

A **pharmacist medication review** should be a conversation, not just a list-check. You can ask questions, explain what matters to you and discuss possible changes. Do not stop or change a prescribed medicine on your own; agree any changes with the healthcare professional responsible for your care.

Who is an NHS medication review for?

There is no single rule that says everyone taking a certain number of medicines automatically qualifies. NHS England guidance places particular emphasis on people who may be at greater risk from their medicines or who could benefit from a more joined-up review. Your practice will consider your circumstances and clinical needs.

- **People taking several medicines:** especially where the combination may be complex, cause unwanted effects or be difficult to manage.
- **People with long-term conditions:** particularly when they have more than one condition and treatments need to be considered together.
- **People with frailty or changing health needs:** where medicines may need closer review as health, mobility or support changes.
- **People who have recently left hospital:** medicines may have been started, stopped or altered during a hospital stay, so it can be helpful to check the current plan.
- **People experiencing possible medicine-related problems:** such as side effects, difficulty taking medicines, or concerns that a treatment is no longer helping.
- **People in a care home or receiving additional support:** whose medicines and care arrangements may benefit from coordinated review.

The phrase **"medication review 3 or more medicines"** is sometimes used in searches, but taking three medicines does not, by itself, guarantee an NHS SMR. Equally, the need for a review is not determined by a

number alone. The type of medicines, your conditions, risks and preferences all matter. Some people taking fewer medicines may need a review, while others taking many may not need an immediate change.

If you think a review would help, contact your GP practice and ask whether an SMR is appropriate. You can also mention a recent hospital discharge, new symptoms, side effects, changes in how you take your medicines, or any medicines and supplements you buy yourself.

What happens during the review?

The format varies between practices. It may be a face-to-face appointment or a telephone or video conversation. You should have time to explain your experience and ask questions. Beforehand, it can help to make a note of what you take and what you want to discuss.

1. **Go through your medicines.** Include regular and occasional prescriptions, inhalers, creams, painkillers, supplements and products bought without a prescription.
2. **Discuss how they are working for you.** Mention benefits, side effects, missed doses, practical difficulties and any worries.
3. **Consider options together.** This might include continuing treatment, adjusting it, simplifying a schedule or discussing whether a medicine is still needed.
4. **Agree a plan.** The clinician should explain any proposed changes and what happens next, including monitoring or follow-up where needed.

A review does not mean that medicines will automatically be stopped. A medicine that appears unnecessary on a list may still have an important purpose, and stopping some medicines suddenly can be harmful. The aim is a safe plan that reflects both clinical evidence and what matters to you.

Is a structured medication review free?

If you are eligible and your review is provided as an NHS service in England, you should not be charged for the consultation. Your GP practice can explain how its SMR service works and whether you are being offered an NHS appointment.

This does not mean every medicine or related service is free. In England, NHS prescription charges may apply to prescriptions, unless you are entitled to an exemption or help with costs. Prescription charging rules differ across the UK: NHS prescriptions are free in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Check the rules that apply where you live.



There is a common mistake in some scraped website content: **no prices were stated in the scraped content**. That is not evidence that a service is free, nor does it provide a reliable price. For any private consultation, vaccination or travel-health service, check the provider's current fees and what is included before booking. Prices can vary, and a service's cost should not be guessed from incomplete web text.

How community pharmacies can help beyond dispensing

Community pharmacies are often the most accessible part of primary care. As well as dispensing prescriptions, pharmacists and their teams can offer advice, help people understand medicines and, where commissioned and appropriately trained, provide additional clinical services. The range available depends on the pharmacy, local arrangements and the service involved.

NHS Pharmacy First and faster access

In England, **NHS Pharmacy First** gives people a route to advice and treatment for certain common conditions without first needing a GP appointment. A pharmacist can assess whether the service is suitable, give self-care advice, and, where appropriate, supply a medicine under the relevant NHS arrangements. They can also direct someone to a GP, NHS 111 or urgent care if symptoms suggest that further assessment is needed.

The service covers seven common conditions:

- sinusitis;
- sore throat;
- earache;
- infected insect bites;
- impetigo;
- shingles; and
- uncomplicated urinary tract infections in women aged 16 to 64.

Pharmacy First can provide faster access for suitable problems, particularly when a GP appointment is not needed. It is not a replacement for emergency care or for a GP when symptoms are severe, persistent or unusual. The pharmacist will use clinical judgement and may refer you elsewhere if that is safer.

The NHS consultation is provided without a consultation fee, but charges may apply for medicines supplied, depending on the service and your eligibility for prescription-charge exemptions. Ask the pharmacy if you are unsure about any cost.

Vaccinations and travel health

Many community pharmacies provide vaccinations, although availability depends on the location and whether the service is NHS-funded or private. Seasonal **flu vaccinations** may be offered through NHS programmes to eligible groups, and some pharmacies also provide privately paid flu jabs to people who are not eligible for a free NHS vaccination.

Pharmacies may also offer **travel vaccinations** and **travel health consultations with risk assessment**. A travel consultation can consider your destination, itinerary, length of stay, planned activities and existing health conditions. The pharmacist or travel-health clinician can then explain which vaccines or other precautions may be relevant and whether you need to be referred elsewhere.

Not every vaccine is available at every pharmacy, and some travel vaccinations or consultations may involve a charge. If you are planning a trip, contact a provider early: some vaccine courses need more than one dose or time to take effect. Confirm the service, availability and fees directly with the pharmacy or travel-health provider rather than relying on an incomplete online listing.

How an SMR differs from other pharmacy services

Service Main purpose Where to ask Structured medication review A planned, personalised review of your medicines, usually arranged for people who may benefit from it. Your GP practice or clinical pharmacist in the practice team. NHS Pharmacy First Assessment and, where appropriate, treatment for seven specified common conditions in England. A participating community pharmacy. Vaccination or travel-health service Immunisation and advice related to seasonal or travel health needs. A pharmacy or other provider offering the relevant service.

A community pharmacist can be an excellent first point of contact for a medicine question or a suitable common condition. However, a Pharmacy First consultation or vaccination appointment does not automatically count as an NHS structured medication review. If you need a full review of your ongoing medicines, ask your GP practice specifically about an SMR.

Getting ready for a medication review

A little preparation can help you get more from the appointment. You do not need to know the names of every medicine by heart, but useful information includes:

- a current medicines list, or the packets and inhalers you use;
- any non-prescription medicines, vitamins or herbal products;
- side effects or symptoms you think may be linked to treatment;
- medicines you find hard to take or remember;
- questions about whether a medicine is still needed or how it should be used; and
- any recent changes made in hospital or by another healthcare professional.

You can ask someone you trust to join the conversation if that would help. If you need an interpreter or another adjustment, tell the practice when arranging the appointment.



The takeaway

An NHS structured medication review is a personalised discussion about whether your medicines remain suitable, safe and manageable. It is often particularly relevant for people with several conditions, complex treatment, frailty, a recent hospital stay or possible medicine-related problems. Taking three medicines alone does not guarantee eligibility, so ask your GP practice if you are unsure.

For eligible patients, the NHS review consultation is free. Community pharmacies also offer valuable services beyond dispensing: NHS Pharmacy First can speed up access for certain common conditions in England, while some pharmacies provide flu vaccinations, travel vaccinations and travel health consultations with risk assessment. These are separate services, and any charges should be confirmed directly with the provider.