

Pharmacy First Advanced Service

common conditions and potential red flags

Clinical pathway

Age range

Red flags

Acute otitis media

1–17 years

- Neck stiffness, photophobia, mottled skin (meningitis)
- Pain, soreness, swelling, tenderness behind the affected ear(s) (mastoiditis)
- Severe headache, confusion or irritability, muscle weakness (brain abscess)
- Headache behind or around the eyes (sinus thrombosis)
- Facial nerve paralysis

Impetigo

≥1 year

- Immunosuppressed and infection widespread
- Severe complications suspected (e.g. deeper soft-tissue infection)

Infected insect bites

≥1 year

- Stings where there is risk of airway obstruction (e.g. in the mouth or throat)
- Concerns of orbital cellulitis from bite or sting around the eyes
- Immunosuppressed with signs and symptoms of infection and elevated NEWS2 score

Shingles

≥18 years

- Neck stiffness, photophobia, mottled skin (meningitis)
- Disorientation, changes in behaviour (encephalitis)
- Muscle weakness, loss of bladder or bowel control (myelitis)
- Facial nerve paralysis
- Shingles in the ophthalmic distribution
- Hutchinson's sign: a rash on the tip, side, or root of the nose
- Visual symptoms: unexplained red eye
- Shingles in immunosuppressed patient where the rash is severe, widespread or patient is systemically unwell
- Elevated NEWS2 score

Sinusitis

≥12 years

- Infraorbital or periorbital complications, such as orbital cellulitis, displaced eyeball, reduced vision
- Intracranial complications, including swelling over the frontal bone
- Signs of meningitis, severe frontal headache or focal neurological signs

Sore throat

≥5 years

- 4Ds: dysphagia, dysphonia, drooling, distress (suspected epiglottitis)
- Clinical signs of dehydration
- Signs of pharyngeal abscess
- Noisy or high-pitched sound with breathing (stridor)
- Persistent hoarseness of the voice for >4 weeks
- Red and white patches and ulcers that do not heal within 3 weeks
- Unexplained lump in the neck, on the lips or in the mouth

Uncomplicated urinary tract infection

Women aged 16–64 years

- Elevated NEWS2 score
- Kidney pain/tenderness in back under ribs
- New/different myalgia
- Flu-like illness
- Shaking chills (rigors) or temperature 37.9°C or above
- Nausea/vomiting
- Visible blood in the urine (haematuria)
- Persistent change in the bladder habit for four weeks
- Problems with urination in people aged over 45 years (hesitancy, interrupted flow, incontinence)