

UK unveils pharmacies plan to ease NHS pressure

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Britain's pharmacists will soon be able to prescribe drugs that were previously only authorized by doctors, under government plans unveiled Tuesday to ease pressure on the state-run National Health Service.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, whose Conservative party was battered in local polls last week over the worsening cost-of-living crisis, wants to ease pressure on [doctors](#)' surgeries and slash NHS waiting lists before a general election expected next year.

The NHS however remains plagued by strikes as [health workers](#) protest over wages that have failed to keep pace with rampant inflation, despite their vital role during the COVID pandemic and beyond.

Under the new plans, treatments for seven common conditions including earache and [sore throats](#) will be available without seeing a doctor.

"One of my five priorities is cutting waiting lists. And today's announcement is getting on with that," Sunak, whose mother was a pharmacist, said on a visit to his home city of Southampton.

"When it comes to pharmacies, what we are doing is providing them with extra money so that people can go to their pharmacy and get medicines for common ailments," he added.

The government hopes the measure will be introduced this winter.

NHS chief executive Amanda Pritchard wrote in the Daily Mail that the overall package to deal with doctor waiting times "will help us to free up millions of appointments for those who need them most."

The state-funded healthcare system recently suffered its biggest day of strike action since it was founded in 1948, with staff complaining of dwindling pay, overwork caused by a lockdown backlog and difficulty in replacing departing colleagues.

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