

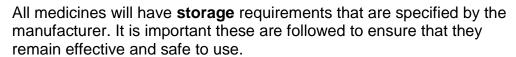
Supporting Care Homes

STORAGE AND EXPIRY DATES

GUIDANCE SHEET

Medicines should be stored in a way that means they are safe and will be effective when administered. All medicines have expiry and storage requirements that are specified by the manufacturer.

The **expiry date** of a drug is the point in time when a medication is no longer within an acceptable condition to be considered effective or safe to use.





Key points for storage

- Keep all medication in the original container in which they were dispensed.
- Keep medicines in original outer packaging, to protect from sunlight.
- Medicines should be stored in a cool (below 25°C) dry place unless refrigeration is required (between 2°C and 8°C), see guidance sheet 01 Fridge Temperatures.
- Store all medication as recommended by the manufacturer.
- It is recommended to check the temperature of storage locations containing medicines daily, and more frequently if high or low temperature is suspected.
- If you suspect that a medication has been stored outside of the specified temperature range, contact your community pharmacist as soon as possible for advice.
- Medications must be stored in a locked designated room, area or trolley only accessible
 to authorised care home staff, this also includes access to the key. If used, a trolley must
 be secured to a wall or immovable object when not in use.
- Residents who have their own medication and self-administer should be provided with a
 lockable storage area in their room. This may also mean the resident is responsible for
 the key. A risk assessment should be carried out and reviewed on a regular basis to
 capture any changes in the residents' circumstances.

Storing medication

- It is important to note and act on any specific storage instructions, e.g. fridge items, controlled drugs.
- Emergency medicines should be stored safely and securely although in a manner that means they can be accessed quickly when needed.
- Rotate stock so the earliest expiry is at the front and therefore will be usedfirst.
- Surplus stock should be stored in a cupboard big enough to allow individual residents' medication to be grouped together.
- Set up a monthly reminder or system to check all expiry dates.
- Any external medication should be kept in a separate locked cupboard or shelf, or in the resident's own room (in a securely locked area).

Expiry after opening

- Certain preparations have a shorter shelf life once they have been opened, e.g. dipyridamole modified release (MR) capsules, some liquids, eye drops, ointments and creams.
- Either the date opened or 'use by' date should be written on the label or container according to process detailed in the care home policy.
- Your community pharmacy may be able supply 'date opened' labels to attach to these medicines.

Examples of different wording of expiry dates:

| Wording on packaging | Definition |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Use before end of January 2020 | Discard 31 st January 2020 |
| Use by January 2020 | Discard 31 st January 2020 |
| Discard after January 2020 | Discard 31 st January 2020 |
| Expires January 2020 | Discard 31 st January 2020 |
| Use within one month of opening | Self-explanatory |
| Discard 7 days after opening | Self-explanatory |

Table of suggested expiry of products from date of opening

| Formulation and packing | Suggested 'use by date' after opening unless otherwise stated by manufacturer and still within manufacturer's expiry date | Rationale |
|--|---|--|
| Tablets and capsules in Monitored Dosage System (MDS) | Use within current month's cycle | Check with your pharmacist or dispensary if you have any questions about this. |
| Tablets, capsules and liquids decanted into pharmacy bottle | Seek community pharmacy or dispensary advice if not stated on dispensing label. | Dependent on stability of product |
| Part pack of tablets and capsules remaining in manufacturer's blister pack dispensed in pharmacy box or in original pack | Manufacturer's expiry on blister. If no expiry visible contact community pharmacy or dispensary for advice | Closed container, contents not openly exposed to environment. If no visible expiry there is a risk that product may have expired |
| Oral liquids in original container | Refer to manufacturers recommendations. Seek community pharmacy or dispensary advice if not stated, remember to mark date of opening on container | Exposure of liquid to environment when dose is measured can introduce contamination |
| Eye, ear, nose drops and ointments | One month, unless otherwise stated by manufacturer | Manufacturer's recommendation |
| Inhalers | Manufacturer's expiry | Closed container, contents not openly exposed to environment |

| Insulin | Four weeks for insulin vials and pens unless otherwise stated | The sterile seal has been broken and may be stored outside the fridge |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Specially produced preparations | Manufacturer's expiry date | Dependant on stability of product |

Important: Any product whose appearance suggests it may be unfit for use should be discarded irrespective of expiry date. If there is any doubt contact the community pharmacy or dispensary for advice. Be aware of the expiry date of when required (PRN) medication especially if they are not used frequently.

Monitored Dose Systems (MDS)

It is recommended that medicines dispensed in an MDS are discarded after the current cycle or 8 weeks after the dispensing date on the label unless otherwise specified. Please note that not all medicines are suitable for inclusion in MDS for example:

- Stability data available which indicates that the medication is not suitable for inclusion in MDS e.g. sodium valproate.
- Medicines that may be harmful when handled e.g. cytotoxic products like methotrexate
- Medicines that are sensitive to moisture, e.g. effervescent tablets
- Light sensitive medicines e.g. chlorpromazine
- Medicines where the dose may vary depending on test results, e.g. warfarin

Effects of using expired stock

- The active drug becomes chemically unstable
- The effectiveness of the drug may change
- The breakdown of the drug may be toxic and harmful to the resident
- Increased risk of contamination

Disposing of medication

Medicines do not always have to be discarded at the end of every monthly cycle. To prevent waste, before disposing of medicines, care home staff should check:

- Is the medicine still prescribed for the resident?
- Is it still within its expiry date?
- If the container has been opened, is it still within its 'use by date'?

If the answer is 'yes' to all these questions then the medication can continue to be used.

Please visit our website for more information: https://www.westhampshireccg.nhs.uk/medicines-in-care-homes

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