



Prescribing Matters Special

Reducing Medicines Waste in Care Homes

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG Medicines Management Team have been providing a pharmacist led medication review service for care home residents since April 2013.



This newsletter is designed to assist Care Homes and GP's with reducing medicines waste in care homes.

It has been produced in conjunction with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG, Medicines Management Team & provides guidance on in-use shelf-lives of medicines to reduce medication waste in care homes.

Attached to this newsletter is a table of in-use shelf-lives of medication in care homes which you may find useful.

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Highlights:

- The CCG is estimated to waste £4m - £5m each year on medicines that are prescribed but never used.
- 50% of medication waste is thought to be avoidable (£2m - £2.5m for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG)
- CQC requirements for topical preparations
- Storage and quantity requirements
- In-Use Shelf-Lives in Care Homes guide

Circulation to all GP practices FAO all clinicians, Community Pharmacies, Hospital and CCG clinical staff and Care Homes

General Information

The CCG is estimated to waste £4m - £5m each year on medicines that are prescribed but never used.

50% of medication waste is thought to be avoidable (£2m - £2.5m for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG).

All staff involved in the management of medication in care homes have a responsibility to ensure medication resources are allocated responsibly.

Care home residents are often required multiple medications, therefore robust procedures should be in place for ordering, storing, administering and reviewing medication.



Topical Tips

Medication waste is common with a variety of medications but this is particularly notable with topical preparations.

1. CQC require specific directions to be added to topical preparations, these should be clear and indicate the area of the body where this is to be applied to and how often. This will also influence the quantity required on prescription.



For example, when used as a barrier cream, a 500g tub of Conotrane® cream may be excessive for some residents. Topical preparations in tubs and pots need to be disposed of on a monthly basis once opened (see table on page 4), therefore a couple of 100g tubes may be less wasteful.

2. Note that the quantity of medication to be applied advised in dosage instruction may also influence the pack size prescribed; such as creams or ointments containing topical steroids as these should be “applied thinly” with doses described using “fingertip units” Also when using Cavilon® cream it is recommended that only a ‘pea sized’ amount is applied because this preparation is highly concentrated and wash resistant.
3. Remember the date of opening should be written on the dispensing label of all topical and liquid preparations.
4. To reduce wastage, some items may safely be retained for use in the following month.

General Hints and Tips



1. Before you request prescriptions for the coming month, check the current stock levels of medication, especially items which are not supplied in individually packed monitored dosage systems (MDS) such as PRN medication and inhalers which may not need to be ordered every month.
2. If a homely remedy policy is in place, consider using a homely remedy.
3. Highlight to the prescriber any quantities that appear excessive (particularly PRN medication) and request that this is adjusted so a smaller quantity can be supplied the following month.
4. Medication must be stored as recommended by the manufacturer, this ensures the medication remains stable for use & the expiry date is reliable. For example storage at room temperature means below 25°C. For items requiring refrigerated storage, the fridge should be monitored, and action taken if this falls outside the 2-8°C range.
5. Most medication including topical preparations (creams and ointments), liquid medication and inhalers can be retained for use if not used over the monthly ordering period (please see the table overleaf for guidance).
6. Do not dispose of unused medicines at the end of the month unless the GP has removed them from the prescription list, or they are unsuitable for continued use e.g. eye drops. Please discuss with your supplying pharmacy how to dispose of medicines safely.
7. Medicines supplied by the community pharmacy cannot be reused, even if returned unused & in pristine condition, so only order what you need.
8. Ask the community pharmacist to remove discontinued medicines from the MAR chart and the GP to remove any discontinued medicines from the repeat side of the prescription. This will help to prevent discontinued medicines being ordered or administered in error.
9. If residents continually refuse to take medicines discuss with the GP before reordering.
10. Ensure residents' medications are reviewed regularly by their GP.

“REMEMBER—Only order what you need”

In-Use Shelf-Lives in Care Homes

For All Medication: Check Manufacturer's Expiry Date on the product first.

<u>Medication</u>	<u>Unopened: stored following manufacturer's guidance</u>	<u>Once opened</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Tablets & capsules in original blister strips with	Manufacturer's expiry date	Manufacturer's expiry date	Medicines kept for use in next month should be recorded in the "carried forward" section of the MAR chart
Tablets & capsules packed in Monitored Dosage	8 weeks *	8 weeks *	PRN (when required) medication, wherever possible, should be used from the manufacturer's original pack
Tablets, capsules and liquids dispensed in medicine bottles	Seek Community Pharmacy advice. Dependent on stability of product	Seek Community Pharmacy advice. Dependent on stability of product	
Oral liquids in original container	Manufacturer's expiry date	6 months after opening, unless manufacturer advises	Write the DATE when opened on the dispensing label
External liquids	Manufacturer's expiry	6 months	Write the DATE when opened on the dispensing label
Creams/Ointments	Manufacturer's expiry date	Tubs/pots: 1 month Tubes/pump dispensers: 3 months	All creams should be for named residents. Creams in pots/tubs should be discarded if contaminated or if the lid has been left off for any indeterminate period.
Eye drops/ointment, ear drops, nose drops	Manufacturer's expiry date	28 days	It is not normal practice to have one bottle of eye drops for each eye in Care/Nursing Homes, except when there is an open infection. Write the DATE when opened on the dispensing label
Nasal spray	Manufacturer's expiry date	3 months unless patient information leaflet recommends	Write the DATE when opened on the dispensing label
Inhalers/Glyceryl Trinitrate sprays (GTN)	Manufacturer's expiry date	Manufacturer's expiry date	If inhalers are used on a PRN (when required) basis, and are still prescribed: retain for on-going use, eave on MAR chart. Only re-order if needed. Ensure product in date for on
Insulins	Manufacturer's expiry date if stored in the fridge	When in use can be kept out of the fridge	One pen/cartridge will often be sufficient per month. Ask the GP to prescribe the nearest number of pens/cartridges

* There is no evidence to support the 8 week expiry date, but this has become common practice. Advice is that light-sensitive or hygroscopic medicines (medicines capable of easily absorbing moisture, e.g. from the air) should not be re-packed into MDS systems. Manufacturers of individual products can be contacted for specific advice.

** Some Medicines have a shorter shelf life once opened

Examples include:

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| • | Asasantin Retard capsules | 6 weeks |
| • | Persantin Retard capsules | 6 weeks |
| • | Glyceryl trinitrate tablets | 8 weeks |
| • | Oramorph 10mg/5ml oral solution | 3 months |
| • | Oramorph Concentrated 20mg/ml oral solution | 4 months |
| • | Risperdal 1mg/ml oral solution | 3 months |
| • | Ranitidine 150mg/10ml oral solution | 1 month |

This list is not exhaustive: always check the manufacturer's label **NB: Many specially manufactured items have a short expiry**

REMEMBER

Certain products do not need to be ordered monthly especially if not used on a regular basis such as when required medication.

Check your stock and expiry dates before submitting any monthly order.