

Medicine Matters

Medicines information for care staff in a social setting

Autumn 2020

“When Required” Medicine Protocols

Medicines prescribed with a ‘when required’ or PRN (from the Latin *pro re nata*) dose can treat many different conditions, often seen prescribed to relieve nausea and vomiting, pain, indigestion, anxiety or insomnia. People with long term conditions may also use a “when required” medicine such as inhaled reliever medicines for people with asthma.

Care homes should have guidance as care plans or PRN protocols for staff to refer to and to ensure that a consistent approach regarding when PRN medicines are offered to residents.

The care plan/ protocol should contain enough information to support staff to administer “when required” medicines as intended by the prescriber. This should include:

- details about what the medicine is being used for
- symptoms to look out for and when to offer the medicine whether the person can ask for the medicine or if they need prompting or observing for signs of need e.g. non-verbal cues
- when to review the medicine and how long the person should expect to take it
- where there is more than one option available, the plan should make clear the order to try them e.g. when using multiple painkillers, you might try paracetamol first then codeine.

This information should be kept with the medicines administration record (MAR) so that is accessible to staff to refer to at all times.

Care plans for “when required” medicines should be **person-centred** so that there is clear guidance specific to the person’s needs.

Variable doses: if a “when required” medicine is prescribed as a variable dose, the protocol should guide staff regarding which dose to select based on the resident’s symptoms.

For an example of a PRN protocol template, please refer to our website: <https://medicines.necsu.nhs.uk/necs-good-practice-guidance-and-tools-for-care-homes/>

Seasonal Flu Vaccine

In light of the risk of flu and COVID-19 co-circulating this winter, the national flu immunisation programme is absolutely essential for protecting vulnerable people and supporting the resilience of the health and care system.

The national flu immunisation programme aims to provide direct protection to those who are at higher risk of flu associated morbidity and mortality. This includes children, older people (>65 years old), people in long stay residential care homes, pregnant women, and those with certain underlying medical conditions.

As with last year, health and social care staff employed by a registered residential care/nursing home or registered domiciliary care provider should receive a vaccination as part of the national programme.

Further information regarding this season’s campaign: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-flu-programme>

Flu Vaccine: Myth busters

Nottinghamshire Alliance Training Hub, Nottinghamshire County Council and Fosse Healthcare have collaborated to develop a video aimed at health and social care staff, but it is suitable for all populations to understand the importance of the vaccine - not just to protect themselves but also communities, family members and most importantly the vulnerable populations. The video is under 5 minutes long and addressed many of the concerns and misunderstandings that people have about the flu vaccine. Please have a look and share it with your team and visitors.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nS6U88e7zs>

Information taken from NHS Futures platform



Thank you for your continued support

We would like to offer our appreciation to our colleagues in care homes and other social care settings of your endurance during the unprecedented recent months in continuing to provide care and support to the people in their care.

If you have any specific learning or areas of new ways of working regarding medicine management in your home or with healthcare partners that you would like to share, please contact the team and we will use Medicine Matters to disseminate your experience to other services.

The Medicines Optimisation Website

Information, guidance documents and various medicine related tools are accessible via our website. These can be downloaded and many may be adjusted to suit your needs. **NECS Medicines Optimisation website:**

<https://medicines.necsu.nhs.uk/category/resources/care-homes/>

Lessons Learnt: Oral Syringes

The issue: Within the North East and Yorkshire Area there have been three recent reports of Morphine Sulfate 10mg/5ml Oral solution being administered as intravenous or subcutaneous injections, one of which was in a care home. Fortunately no serious harm was caused. After investigations the most common cause was that the correct syringe was not used to draw up the oral solution i.e. an IV syringe was used instead of an oral syringe. Other factors were staff errors due to insufficient training. Action plans have been implemented, however, we wish to raise awareness of these incidents. If dispensing or prescribing oral solutions please make sure that the organisation has the correct equipment to administer the solution, especially if doses are small.

What are the recommendations?

NICE guidance (<https://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/SC1>) states that administration of medicines must be **using the correct equipment depending on the formulation (for example, using oral syringes for small doses of liquid medicines)**.

When supplying medicines, pharmacists are required to: Supply either a 5ml plastic measuring spoon with every oral liquid medicine (if not already in the manufacturer's pack)
Or

Supply a 1ml, 5ml or 10ml plastic oral syringe measure with every oral liquid medicine

- Spoons and oral syringes used to administer medicines are required to comply with specific British or European standards.
- Oral syringes must be **clearly labelled 'oral'** and/or 'enteral' in a large font size and be wrapped together with a bottle adaptor and instructions
- Some manufacturers supply oral/enteral syringes with purple coloured plungers or syringe barrels to help differentiate them from intravenous syringes

The choice of whether a spoon or syringe (and its size) is supplied will depend on the nature of the medication regime and the patient's needs.

Considerations for care homes

Care homes should ensure that the appropriate equipment is available for administration of medicines (these may be purchased by the home or received with pharmacy supplies).

Syringes for oral use should be clearly marked and stored in a different place to any syringes used for injections (IV/SC).

Contact the pharmacist if further advice is needed regarding appropriate equipment to support safe administration of medicines.

Digital Developments that can help Medicine Management in Care Homes

We are all aware of the digital advances that seem to have escalated in the last few months as we look to see how we can communicate with each other and continue to deliver our services whilst minimising contact time and managing infection control. As well as in our home life, we have seen many developments in the work place, including in medicine management. Some of these systems were being explored before the pandemic but progress and implementation has escalated more recently.

Some of the medicine related digital solutions we are now seeing include:

- Sharing of information such as when a person is discharged/ transferred from hospital to the care home - using secure electronic mail
- Virtual meetings, both for social use such as relatives talking to their loved ones and also clinical discussions with the GP, healthcare teams
- Proxy on-line ordering of medicines
- Electronic Medicine Administration Record (MAR) charts
- Use of capacity tracker to understand current issues in the care homes (including a recent questionnaire about proxy ordering implementation and use of syringe pumps in nursing homes
 - For general enquiries regarding use of the Capacity Tracker system please contact: necsu.capacitytracker@nhs.net.

It is really important that your teams feel confident with using technology and have the appropriate training and support to ensure the system works effectively and safely.

Does your home need support with obtaining equipment? Care homes that receive some or all of their funding for residential care from the NHS or from a local authority may be eligible to access iPad for use in the home <https://www.nhs.uk/covid-19-response/social-care/ipad-offer-care-homes/>

Useful information:

NHSX <https://www.nhsx.nhs.uk/>

- can support with accessing internet connections
- provide guides for care homes such as a suite of documents for the proxy on-line ordering of medicines. NHS Futures platform <https://future.nhs.uk/connect.ti> (you need to register as a user using a secure email address before you can access resources)

If you have any questions regarding this newsletter or if you have an idea for an article to be included in a future issue, please contact us on Tel: 0191 2172558 where you will be forwarded to the most appropriate member of the team

Please don't forget to share this newsletter with your colleagues!