

Medicine Matters

North of England
Commissioning Support

Medicines information for care staff in a social setting

Winter 2016/17

Hydration and Medication

Care homes are required to ensure that people under their care receive adequate nutrition and hydration to sustain life and good health and reduce the risks of malnutrition and dehydration. (Health and Social Care Regulations 2014).

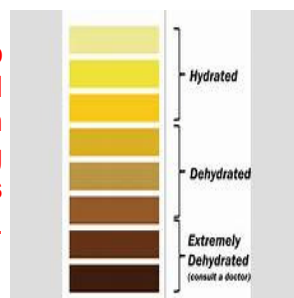
Sometimes it may be difficult to get service users to drink adequate amounts of fluid due to problems in swallowing (dysphagia) and some patients may not be able to vocalize their fluid needs, eg. in dementia.

To compound this, the elderly may take medication which further increases their risk of dehydration such as: water tablets (furosemide/ bendroflumethiazide), medication for incontinence (solifenacin/oxybutynin) and medication for nerve pain e.g. amitriptyline. The list is by no means exhaustive and is just to highlight that elderly patients may be at greater risk of dehydration because of medication.

As carers you will be aware of the importance of “pushing fluids” and recording what people drink in their “fluid charts”. By being aware that some medication may further increase the risk of dehydration, carers are in an ideal position to reduce the likelihood of drug-induced dehydration, by ensuring patients remain hydrated.

It is important to be able to spot the signs of dehydration and be able to act on them promptly. Signs include eating or drinking less, dark coloured or small volume of urine, confusion, constipation, headache, tiredness and urine infections .

Fluid charts should be used to help determine both intake and output of urine. Urine charts can guide you in determining whether your service user is dehydrated.



Sick Day rules to prevent Acute Kidney Injury

If a resident becomes unwell with a high fever or has vomiting or diarrhoea:

1. **Keep their fluid intake up** to make sure they have enough fluids in their body and are adequately hydrated. As a general rule, they should drink plenty until the acute/sudden illness passes. This is likely to be at least 7 cups a day (one cup = 200ml) unless you they have other instructions from their doctor. If they are vomiting, medical advice is to take small sips of water/fluid frequently, until the symptoms have settled.

2. **Avoid alcoholic drinks.**

3. **Speak to the GP or specialist** team if the resident is passing less urine than normal OR if they are unable to keep fluids down.

The GP may need to do a blood test to check how well the kidneys are working, in particular for residents taking one or more of the following medicines who suddenly become unwell with a high fever or have vomiting or diarrhoea:

- **ACE Inhibitors:** ramipril, lisinopril, enalapril, perindopril
There are others: they end with the letters “..pril”
- **Sartans:** Losartan, candesartan, irbesartan, valsartan
There are others: they end with “..sartan”
- **Water tablets** (diuretics): furosemide, bumetanide, spironolactone, metolazone, eplerenone,,bendroflumethiazide, chlortalidone, indapamide, amiloride.
- **Metformin** or combination tablets containing metformin
- **Anti-inflammatory painkillers:** ibuprofen, naproxen, diclofenac, aceclofenac celecoxib, etoricoxib, meloxicam, etodolac, indomethacin

If the patient has heart or kidney failure contact the GP or Out of Hours service immediately for advice .

For some residents you may be advised to temporarily stop some medicines prescribed until the symptoms of fever, vomiting or diarrhoea settle. If this takes more than 48 hours, please check with the GP or Out of Hours GP Service for advice.

Ensure there are clear records regarding when the medicine is stopped and when and how to restart it.

This is important. Dehydration can harm the kidneys and certain medication can make this worse.

NECS Medicines Optimisation website:

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

Lessons Learnt

We have recently become aware of a significant event reported at a GP surgery which involved a patient being given the wrong blood glucose test strips for their glucose monitoring machine resulting in the patient having falsely low blood sugar readings.

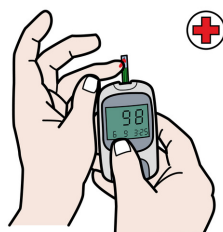
We thought it might be useful to share this with you so you can ensure that your patients with diabetes have the correct test strips for their glucose monitoring machine.

- Glucose test strips are not interchangeable between machines and each machine is only compatible with the same brand test strips i.e. Element strips for Element machines, Contour strips for Contour machines and Glucolab strips for Glucolab machines.
- Using the wrong test strips can result in incorrect BM (blood sugar) measurements resulting in harm to patients.

Please make sure that the home is using the correct glucose test strips for the glucose monitoring machine being used.

Ensure staff are familiar with how to use the equipment and how to record and respond to the readings.

Consider whether a specific care plan is required to define how often blood glucose monitoring is carried out and actions to take if the readings are within or out of the recommended range for the individual.



If you have any questions, regarding diabetic monitoring please clarify details with the GP surgery or diabetic service supporting the individual.

Medicine information resources for care homes



The NICE website has loads of fabulous resources for care home including e-learning.

All guidance resources for care homes can be seen by clicking the link <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/settings/care-homes>

Specific guidance about Managing Medicines can be seen by clicking the link

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/sc1>

Resources including a checklist for what is needed in a medication policy can be seen by clicking the link

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/sc1/resources>

The BNF is available free of charge to care homes

<https://www.evidence.nhs.uk/formulary/bnf/current>

Patient information Leaflets are available from <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/>

Our website has recently been updated with lots of useful resources for care homes. Resources include charts to record administration of all prescribed products as well as best practice guidance

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

Free on-line resources for care homes

Don't forget your community pharmacist can provide you with up to date information and advice about how to best take medicines

Future Issues: If you have an idea for an article to be included in a future issue, please contact your local Medicine Optimisation Care Home Team

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