

Administration of medicines in hospitals and NHS Lothian healthcare premises



Purpose of this procedure:

The administration of medicines must be undertaken in a methodical manner and distractions must be minimised while medicines are being selected, prepared and administered.

The Procedure:

- 1.0 The following procedure must be undertaken before administering a medicine. If a witness is required, each step of the procedure must be witnessed.
 - Read the prescription carefully
 - Check that the medicine is correct for the patient
 - Ascertain that the prescribed dose has not already been given
 - Select the medicine required and check the label and the medicine against the prescription
 - Check the expiry date
 - Identify the patient by checking the name on the prescription against the name and CHI number on the patient's identity band; if this is not possible then you must be able to satisfy yourself to the identity of the patient.
- 2.0 Complex dose calculations must be carried out independently by two registered practitioners to check accuracy. Simple calculations, for example the number of tablets required for a dose, may be carried out by a single registered practitioner. A senior nurse, doctor or pharmacist must be contacted in cases of uncertainty. In calculations involving patients' weight the date of the weight measurement must be recorded.
- 3.0 The prescribed medicine must be administered as near as possible to the prescribed time. If this is not possible and there is any doubt about the implications of administering a medicine outwith the prescribed time, medical advice must be sought. See [Administration of medicines outwith prescribed times Procedure](#).
- 4.0 If a prescribed medicine is not given, the reason must be recorded clearly on the prescription record, documented in the patient's medical record, and the responsible doctor informed. If the patient has administered their own medicine this should be recorded as "self" and is not required to be signed by the nurse on the Prescription and Administration Record. This should not be used for regular medicines or as part of routine practice. See [Self-administration of medicines by patients in hospital not yet reviewed by a doctor Procedure](#).

- 5.0 Medicines must never be left unattended between removal from the storage area and administration to the patient. Doses of medicines must not be left unsupervised on patients' lockers. The practitioner responsible for administering the medicine must supervise the patient until administration is complete, or the start of the administration for slow administration that takes more than a few minutes.
- 6.0 An oral syringe must be used to measure oral doses that are required in doses other than multiples of 5 mL. Syringes for the administration of injections must not be used for the administration of oral medicines, including medicines given via enteral feeding tubes, to avoid the risk of the oral medicine being injected in error.
- 7.0 If a witness is required, the whole administration period must be witnessed except for slow administration that takes more than a few minutes, for example infusions, for which the set up and start of the administration must be witnessed.
- 8.0 If the patient requests a dose that is different from the prescribed dose, the doctor must be informed so that the prescription may be reviewed before the medicine is administered.
- 9.0 For patients with restricted oral intake, the action must be taken depending on the category of restriction, see [Hospital patients with restricted oral intake Procedure](#).
- 10.0 Administration must be recorded by signing the appropriate entry on the prescription record.
- 12.0 There may be occasion where Community Nurses, Community Psychiatric Nurses or Hospital at Home Nurses are required to come into hospital to administer medicines to patients under their care. This may include oral, intravenous, depot or palliative care medicines. Medicine administered in hospital must be prescribed on a Prescription and Administration Record. The nurses administering the medicines must sign the hospital Prescription and Administration Record. When administering an intravenous medicine or setting up a syringe driver, two registered nurses or a registered nurse and a doctor, who are competent, must follow the procedure through. Both registered practitioners must sign the Prescription and Administration Record and supplementary chart where appropriate.

Associated materials/references:

[Safe Use of Medicines Policy](#)

[Administration of medicines outwith prescribed times Procedure](#)

[Self-administration of medicines by patients in hospital not yet reviewed by a doctor Procedure](#)

[Hospital patients with restricted oral intake Procedure](#)

[Royal Pharmaceutical Society & Royal College of Nurses. Professional Guidance on Administration of Medicines in Healthcare Settings. \(January 2019\)](#)