

# The supply of medicines in hospitals when the Pharmacy Department is closed



## Purpose of this procedure:

The charge nurse is responsible for ensuring that all required medicines are available so that doses are not missed or delayed unnecessarily. There must be a system in place to ensure that adequate supplies of required medicines are ordered during the pharmacy opening hours. The equivalent authorised registered healthcare professional, e.g., radiographer, is the responsible person when there is no charge nurse.

The site lead pharmacist must ensure that an on-call pharmacist is available to provide advice on availability and safe use of medicines when the pharmacy is closed, and to provide urgently required medicines from the pharmacy if necessary.

The site lead pharmacist must ensure that an adequate supply of the agreed list of medicines that may be required in an emergency is maintained in an emergency cupboard on each hospital site where patients may be treated, when the pharmacy is closed. The senior nurse responsible for the site, or Hospital at Night co-ordinator must have access to the emergency cupboard.

## The Procedure:

### **1.0 If a prescribed medicine is not available in the clinical area when the pharmacy is closed, the nurse in charge must act as follows.**

- consult with the prescriber to agree whether the dose may be missed or delayed without compromising patient care, until the pharmacy is open.

If not:

- consult with the prescriber to agree whether an alternative medicine that is available can be prescribed and administered, without compromising patient care.

If not:

- contact the senior nurse responsible for the site, or 'Hospital at Night' co-ordinator via the hospital switchboard.

2.0 The senior nurse responsible for the site, or Hospital at Night co-ordinator must check ward and emergency cupboard stock lists that are available and arrange for medicines to be transferred if appropriate. Refer to NHS Lothian Safe Use of Medicines procedure, '*Transfer of Medicines between wards, theatres, and departments.*' (document in development)

3.0 If the medicine is not available to transfer, or if it is not appropriate to transfer the medicine, and if the medicine is required before the pharmacy opens, the senior nurse responsible for the site or Hospital at Night Co-ordinator must contact the on-call pharmacist.

- 4.0 For advice regarding accessing schedule 2 and schedule 3 (subject to safe custody) controlled drugs out of hours, refer to NHS Lothian Safe Use of Medicines procedure for *controlled drugs*. [Controlled Drugs Procedures \(nhslothian.scot\)](https://www.nhs.uk/lothian-trusts/lothian-services/clinical-pharmacy/controlled-drugs-procedures)
- 5.0 If the medicine is for a patient being discharged, or on pass, the charge nurse must take the following steps before contacting the senior nurse responsible for the site, or Hospital at Night co-ordinator.
- Check if the patient already has an adequate labelled supply on the ward or at home. The instructions on the medicine labels should be checked against the immediate discharge letter.
  - For wards that use the one stop dispensing medicine supply system, then over labelled packs may be able to be transferred from other ward areas as per the process in 2.0 above.
  - Check when the next dose is required after the patient leaves the ward. If it is not required until after the pharmacy next opens, and the patient lives within a reasonable distance of the hospital, arrange for the patient or representative to collect the medicines from the ward the next day, or inform the patient that the medicines will be delivered to their home the next day.
  - If the patient is being discharged and some or all the medicines are to be delivered to the patient's home, give the patient a copy of the 'Immediate Discharge Letter'. This is in case the GP must be contacted before the medicines are delivered with the copy of the prescription.
  - If the medicines are to be collected, or are to be delivered to the patients' home, inform the clinical pharmacist or dispensary manager as soon as the pharmacy opens.
- 6.0 Refer to the Safe Use of Medicines procedure [The transport of medicines.](#)
- 7.0 The on-call pharmacist must act as follows.
- If the medicine is not stocked in another ward or department and another medicine is not appropriate, and the medicine is stocked in the pharmacy, if deemed clinically appropriate, the on-call pharmacist will attend the hospital to supply.
  - If the pharmacist does not think that the medicine requires to be supplied out of hours, then this should be discussed with the prescriber.
  - If the medicine is not stocked in the pharmacy, discuss with the prescriber, and agree appropriate action.

Associated materials/references:

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[Safe Use of Medicines – Policy Online \(nhslothian.scot\)](#)

[The ordering of medicines by wards and clinical areas in hospitals \(nhslothian.scot\)](#)

[Controlled Drugs Procedures \(nhslothian.scot\)](#)

[The transport of medicines](#)

[Medicines on patient transfer within and between NHS Lothian healthcare premises](#)

*Transfer of medicines between wards, theatres and departments* (Document in development)