

Managing medicines for adults receiving social care in the community

Information for the public
Published: 30 March 2017

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Help to manage your medicines if you receive social care at home

NICE has written advice about helping people who have social care at home to manage their medicines. This includes people in sheltered or supported housing, and those in temporary accommodation (for example, for people who are homeless). The advice is for people who provide care and support, such as care workers, GPs, pharmacists and social workers, but it contains important advice that you need to know about if you receive social care at home and might need support to use or look after your medicines.

What happens if I need to take medicines at home?

Most people are able to look after and take their own medicines at home without help. However, some people may need extra help and support, for example, with remembering which medicine to take and when, storing and organising their medicines, or reading the

labels.

If you are given medicines to take at home, your pharmacist or another member of your care team should talk to you about whether you need help to manage them. They should check if you understand what each medicine is for and if you have had problems with your medicines before.

What happens if I do need help?

Your care team should talk to you about what help you should get with your medicines. When this is decided, it should be written in the care plan that you get from the service providing your support (your provider's care plan). This is a record of the care and support you have agreed. Everyone involved in your care should have a copy of your provider's care plan.

Your provider's care plan should say who will help you with each medicine and what help they will give. It should state whether you need support to take the medicine yourself (for example, help opening containers or reminding you to take your medicine) or if you need someone to give you the medicine.

Your care team should agree a date with you for checking your medicines support to see if it still meets your needs, and record it in your provider's care plan.

Who will help me with my medicines?

Some people have help from a family member or carer but you may also need support from the care workers who provide your care, such as your home care worker, support worker or personal assistant. If your care worker is going to help you with your medicines, the service providing your care should arrange for your GP and your pharmacist to be told about this, so that everyone involved in your care knows what is agreed.

It is also important for everyone to know who is in charge of your medicines so they know who to speak to if there are problems or changes in your prescriptions. You may be confident to do this yourself or it could be a family member or carer, or a care coordinator if you have one (this is a member of your care team who is nominated to be in charge of your care).

What help can my care worker give me?

Your care worker can only give you the support that you have discussed and agreed with your care team, and that is in your provider's care plan. This could include:

- picking up prescriptions
- reminding you to take your medicines
- helping you store your medicines safely
- giving your medicines to you
- planning home visits around when you need to take your medicines.

If you need someone to give you your medicine, your care worker should be trained to do this. They should only give you your medicine if there is clear information from your pharmacist or GP on how to take it (for example in the patient information leaflet or on the medicines label). Before helping you to take a dose they should always ask if you have already taken it and check your records.

They shouldn't leave a dose out for you to take later, unless this has been agreed and is in your provider's care plan.

Your care worker should keep a record of any support they have given you with each of your medicines.

What if I have problems with my medicines?

If you have questions about how to take your medicine correctly it is important to speak to a healthcare professional, like your GP or pharmacist. Your care worker or social worker can't advise you about your medicine. However, if they are concerned that you are having problems with your medicines they should tell the service that provides your care.

Your care team should encourage you to ask for help if you are worried about your medicines. Details of who to contact should be in your provider's care plan. You should also be told how to report side effects from a medicine. Talk to your doctor if side effects are causing you problems, but it is also helpful to report it online to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency through its [yellow card scheme](#).

Your care team should also explain what to do if you need to make a complaint or contact an advocate (someone who helps you put your views across) if this would be useful.

Where should I keep my medicines?

You should be given advice and information about how to store your medicine safely. It should be agreed and recorded in your provider's care plan where you will keep your medicines and who is responsible for them. You should do this yourself if you are able to.

If your care team is worried that your medicines are not being stored safely, they should talk to you (and your family or carers if possible) about storing your medicines in a lockable cupboard.

What do I do with medicines I don't need or used medicine?

You, and your family or carers should be given advice about what to do with leftover medicines or used medicines (such as used patches and opened bottles of liquid). You may be asked to return your unused medicines to your pharmacist so they can be destroyed safely. Talk to the service providing your care if you will need help to do this.

More information

- [NHS Choices](#) has lots of information on medicines health conditions and social care.
- For information and support contact the Relatives & Residents Association (020 7359 8136), www.relres.org
- For information and concerns about care contact the Care Quality Commission (03000 61 61 61), www.cqc.org.uk

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ISBN: 978-1-4731-2405-9

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