

Pharmacy tip: Non-prescribed medication

The following applies to care homes and domiciliary care.

What issues need to be considered?

- What safeguards are required?
- What storage is required?
- What records are required?
- Which non-prescribed medicines are allowed?

Guidance

Non-prescribed medicines may be purchased from pharmacies and other sales outlets and include herbal and homeopathic remedies.

In social care, non-prescribed medicines are available to people using services, both in care homes and domiciliary care. These medicines can be purchased either directly by the person receiving care or by a visitor or by a carer if they have been asked to do so.

In care homes there may be the provision for non-prescribed medicines in the form of homely remedies for the limited treatment of minor ailments.

Providers of care are required to include a reference to the controls on non-prescribed medicines in their medication policies & procedures. This should include encouraging users of their service and their visitors to inform staff of any non-prescribed medicines kept or requested by people

This is to be recorded in the care plan and entered on the medicine administration record (MAR) chart indicating if the person is self-administering the non-prescribed medicine and in the case of a care home, if it is kept in their room. Where care staff are involved in the administration of non-prescribed medicines they should make a record on the MAR chart of each dose administered.

The MAR chart then provides a complete list of all medicines used by the person. It can then be used to monitor treatment, decide if a change of treatment is required, identify any interaction with prescribed medication or diet and as a record of all medication present in the care home.

The dispensing pharmacist/GP should be informed of any non-prescribed medicines being taken by people who use the service. This will ensure a complete profile of medication is included in their patient medication records to identify any interaction with prescribed medication or diet and monitor for possible adverse effects

In the interest of identifying any issues it is encouraged that the purchase of non-prescribed medicines should be from the pharmacist serving the home.

If people require a carer to administer their non-prescribed medicines then they should be encouraged to store it with their prescribed medication. However, if the person is self-administering then non-prescribed medicines should be kept in locked storage in their room in a care home or out of the reach and sight of children in domiciliary care.

Care homes have a duty of safety to other users of the service and visitors to prevent access to medication and other substances that may cause harm if misused.

Homely Remedies Policy

Social care providers have a duty of care to respond to users of the service who have symptoms of a minor nature, for example, toothache. How the provider meets this duty is to be included in their documented policies and procedures and may include the use of homely or household remedies.

If it is decided to provide non-prescribed medicines for the general treatment of minor ailments they should be kept in the medication storage but, separated from prescribed medication.

The non-prescribed medicines should be agreed locally with the GP and pharmacist and restricted to a limited list to reduce the risk of adverse reaction and interaction with prescribed medication. Homely remedies for general use are neither supplied on prescription nor labelled for individuals.

A homely remedies documented policy and procedure should include the limited range of remedies that are kept, what they are to be used for and the limit on the duration of treatment (usually 48 hours) before the person's GP is informed if symptoms persist.

It is good practice to request GPs to endorse their agreement to the documented policy and procedure by signing the document.