

Pharmacy tip: Self medication

The following applies to care homes. It does not apply to domiciliary care agencies.

What issues need to be considered?

- Are people in the home able to self medicate?
- What records should the home keep?
- How should medicines for self medication be stored in care homes?

Guidance

People have the right to choose to manage their own medicines if they want to, with appropriate support from the care home. This is particularly important for short term respite, or intermediate care, when people may need to be able to manage their own medicines when they return home.

Everyone going into a care home should be offered the opportunity on admission to manage their own medicines and at other times during their stay. For example a younger person being helped to more independent living or an older person whose health or confidence improves.

The degree of self medication can vary from a person able to completely manage all the medication arrangements themselves to someone who wishes to keep and use their own inhalers but not their other medicines.

What arrangements need to be in place if a person wishes to self medicate?

Any process involving self medication must be subject to a robust risk assessment which is reviewed at regular intervals and when there is any change in the person's circumstances. The care plan must reflect the person's wishes and the specific arrangements for their medication.

Locked storage must be provided for each person. Any controlled drugs that they take can be kept in here and do not need to be locked in the home's controlled drug cupboard.

Some people may need extra help to be able to manage their medicines, such as special monitored dosage systems. The supplying pharmacy should be able to help with this.

What records should be made?

Homes must have documented assessments of the risks to both the person self medicating and other people living in the home. They should also have care plans for self medication which should include the frequency of any checks made that the person is managing their medicines successfully.

Any medicines ordered by the home on behalf of the resident must be recorded when they are received into the home and a record made when they are handed over to the person who self medicates.

There is no need for staff to fill in the administration section of the MAR chart when people self-administer medicines, but the chart should indicate that the person self medicates. Some homes choose to use the chart to show that they have checked that the medicine has been taken, but it must be clear that this medication has not actually been given by staff.