

Medicines Optimisation

Best Practice Guidance for Care Homes – *Bulletin 10*

Guidance on Expiry of Medications

Table of Suggested Expiry of Products from Date of Opening

Formulation and packaging	Suggested expiry <u>AFTER OPENING</u> *	Rationale
Tubs of creams/ointments	1 month	The contents are exposed and can become contaminated.
Tubes of creams /ointments	3 months	Closed container, contents not openly exposed to environment.
Pump dispenser packs of creams/ointments	Manufacturer's expiry	Closed container contents not openly exposed to environment.
Tablets/capsules in monitored dosage systems (MDS)	8 weeks from date of dispensing or the expiry date printed on the reverse side of the MDS	Medication is more exposed to light and moisture when packed in an MDS
Tablets/capsules/liquids decanted into pharmacy bottle	Dependent on product .	Seek community pharmacy advice.
Tablets/capsules in original pack or blistered medication dispensed into pharmacy box.	Manufacturers' expiry on blister If no expiry visible seek community pharmacy advice.	Closed container not openly exposed to environment. If no visible expiry there is risk that product may have expired.
Oral liquids in original container	3 months unless otherwise specified by manufacturer, for example: Antibiotics: 7-14 days Citalopram drops: 16 weeks	Exposure of liquid to environment when dose is measured can introduce contamination.
Insulin	Unopened and stored in the fridge manufacture's expiry date Once opened - Varies for different insulin vials and pens. Check packaging and follow manufacture's guidance.	Sterile seal intact, stored correctly. Sterile seal has been broken some pens and vials may be kept out of the fridge once opened and used for up to 28 days.
Inhalers	Manufacturer's expiry. Refer to dose counter if available. Check packaging for individual inhalers	Closed container, contents not openly exposed to environment. Shelf-life may be reduced on opening or storage out of fridge.

*unless otherwise stated by manufacturer and still within manufacturer's expiry date

Table of Suggested Expiry of Products from Date of Opening

Formulation and packaging	Suggested expiry <u>AFTER OPENING</u> *	Rationale
Eye, Ear, Nose drops/ointments	Normally 28 days but check manufacturer's expiry on label.	Manufacturer's recommendation – Many eye drops now have a shelf life >28 days after opening. Some drops need to be stored in the fridge.
Glyceryl Trinitrate Spray (GTN)	Manufacture's expiry.	Closed container contents not openly exposed to environment.
Glyceryl Trinitrate Tablets (GTN)	8 weeks after opening	Exposure to environment affects stability.
SIP feeds / ONS	Unopened manufactures expiry date Once opened follow manufacture's guidance	Sealed container Some can be kept open in the fridge for up to 24 hours, but not all require fridge storage once open.

***unless otherwise stated by manufacturer and still within manufacturer's expiry date**

Key Points:

- Record the date opened and the calculated expiry on the product label/package for all:
 - Creams ● Eye / ear drops ● Insulin pens / vials ● Oral liquids ● SIP feeds / ONS.
- All medicines should be stored in the original container in which they were dispensed.
- All medicines should be stored in their original outer packaging to protect from sunlight.
- All medicines should be stored in a cool (below 25°C) dry place unless refrigeration is required (between 2° and 8°C).
- The expiry date of products can change once opened; contact with water, air, light or change in temperature can alter the effectiveness of the medication.
- Using expired products may result in the medication becoming:
 - Chemically unstable
 - Ineffective
 - Potentially toxic and harmful to the resident
 - Contaminated resulting in potential risk of infection to the resident.
- Ensure all expired medications are removed from the drug trolley or drug cupboard and returned to the pharmacy for disposal (residential homes) or to the contracted disposal company (nursing homes).
- Any product whose appearance suggests it may be unfit for use should be discarded irrespective of expiry date. If there is any doubt, contact the community pharmacy.
- Be aware of PRN medicine expiry dates especially if not used frequently. If a medication has not been used for more than 3 months, please ask GP to review and consider need to continue.
- PRN medications in tablet / capsule form should be supplied in original packs, not in MDS. Any such surplus at the end of the monthly cycle should be carried over (according to expiry date) and not returned to the pharmacy and re-ordered to avoid wastage.

Keep a record of date checking

References

- Frimley Clinical Commissioning Group; Good Practice Guidance for Care Homes: Expiry dates for medication <https://www.frimley.icb.nhs.uk/policies-and-documents/medicines-optimisation/care-homes/medicines-management/831-expiry-dates-good-practice-guide-frimley/file>
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society Great Britain; Handling medicines. <https://www.rpharms.com/recognition/setting-professional-standards/safe-and-secure-handling-of-medicines>
- Preqipp Emollients and barrier preparations guidance <https://www.prescqiip.info/umbraco/surface/authorisedmediasurface/index?url=%2fmedia%2f5023%2f240-care-homes-emollients-and-barrier-preparations-21.pdf>

Title	Best Practice Guidance – Expiry of Medications
Description of policy	To inform healthcare professionals
Scope	Guidance on expiry of medications once issued to care homes
Prepared by	Medicines Optimisation Team
Evidence base / Legislation	Level of Evidence: <i>A. based on national research-based evidence and is considered best evidence</i> B. mix of national and local consensus <i>C. based on local good practice and consensus in the absence of national research based information.</i>
Dissemination	Is there any reason why any part of this document should not be available on the public website? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes / No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Review date and by whom	Medicines Optimisation Team
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Version Control (To be completed by policy owner)

Version	Date	Author	Status	Comment
0.1	February 2015	Prescribing & Medicines Management Team (LS)	Draft	Amendments to wording regarding recording of dates opened.
0.2	April 2015	Prescribing & Medicines Management Team (LS)	Draft	Approved at April Prescribing Reference Group
1.0	April 2015	Prescribing & Medicines Management Team (LS)	Final	Authorised at April Prescribing Reference Group
1.1	April 2018	Prescribing & Medicines Management Team (ZD/SPC)	Draft	Reviewed and updated. AGEM Logo's added. Inhaler & insulin information updated
2.0	June 2018	Prescribing & Medicines Management Team	Final	Approved by Senior Team June 18
2.1	Nov 20	Medicines Optimisation Team - LW	Review	Reviewed and updated
2.2	May 21	Medicines Optimisation Senior Team	Review	Suggested changes discussed at STM and agreed – changes made
3.0	May 21	Medicines Optimisation Senior Team	Review	Suggested changes discussed at STM and agreed – changes made
3.1	October 2023	Medicines Optimisation Team Lindsay Wortley		Uploaded to new template only, links checked – needs clinical oversight