

Appendix One: Supporting medicines compliance – Advice and Guidance

The advice and guidance in this pack are for all healthcare professionals to raise awareness of the wide range of support that can be of benefit to patients, their families or social care workers looking for solutions to manage their medication. Healthcare professionals should be mindful of “reasonable adjustments” covered by the Equality Act 2010, and or when it may be appropriate for the patient to be charged.

Identifying why a patient has problems with their medication should be the first step to considering the most appropriate solution. People often have their own bespoke systems to manage, and it is better to work with these systems rather than introduce something new that may increase confusion.

Consider the following:

1. Medication Review
2. Dexterity ¹
3. Memory and Cognition ²
4. Sensory Impairments
5. Language, Literacy and Learning, Including Swallowing
6. Compliance Aids (for self/family filling)
7. Medicines Compliance Aids (professionally filled)

Below is a list of some options that are available as solutions to the lack of compliance with medication regimes. Products are not recommendations of suitability for use but may be used for awareness.

1. Medication Review

Undertaken by the GP practice by a relevant prescriber. To support compliance – a medication review should consider:

- If all treatment is indicated, necessary and appropriate
- Can the regime be simplified – number of tablets, number of times taken per day
- Clear prescribing directions of how to take or use the medicine and where appropriate the condition being treated
- Reviewing the quantity supplied – this may be increasing as well as decreasing quantities supplied according to any identified need.

Many patients seeking support around compliance, may be recommended for a Structured Medication Review. Further guidance can be found here: [SMR-toolkit-Feb-2026.pdf](#)

NICE guidance on medicines adherence (CG76) emphasises that involving patients in decision making process about medicines use is the main way to improve medicines taking. This includes understanding the patient’s perspective on treatment outcomes, their healthcare aims, and the associated risks and benefits.

2. Dexterity ¹	
Manual dexterity is the ability to use the hands for precise tasks. Poor dexterity may impact on grip strength, picking items up from surfaces (pincer movement). It may be caused by loss of strength, swelling, pain, tremor, loss of feeling or amputations.	
Dropping tablets	Open medicines packaging over a work surface or table. Using a tray or shallow container may help to avoid tablets rolling onto the floor.
Larger or alternative containers	Can be easier to hold and open than small packets. Check whether a medicine can be stored outside of its original container. Consider whether tamper-evident carton seals may need removing with agreement of the patient prior to supply.
Easy open tops	Non child resistant tops can be supplied with appropriate advice about keeping out of reach of children, pets or other vulnerable people.
Winged caps (also usually easy open)	Non child resistant tops with a wing attachment. 
Bottle openers	Support twisting action to remove screw caps. Can be used for child-resistant and easy open tops. Other “kitchen” devices may also support e.g. silicone lid removers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example products shown in the device section.
Blister / foil strip removal	Consider decanting to a bottle – with / without easy open lid as appropriate. Devices available to facilitate the push-through removal of medicines. Some will also “catch” the medication. Use fingernail to pierce foil prior to removal. Some foils require peeling back to open rather than push-through to avoid crushing the tablet / capsule. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example products shown in the device section.
MCA opening / removal	Dexterity can impact on suitability for MCA use. Devices available to pierce required section and some will also aid removal from the MCA. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example products shown in the device section.
Creams / ointments	Tubes – “key” devices readily available to squeeze out contents. Applicator devices to use on inaccessible areas e.g. back, lower legs.

Liquid medicines	Oral syringes may be preferable to measuring using a spoon. Tablet formulations may be preferable for patients who struggle with spoons.
Eye drop aids	Can aid to get the bottle in the right position and squeezing the container. Some devices are available on prescription (but check the suitability for the eye drop bottle). Some devices are available from specific manufacturers e.g. Alcon Eyoti, Celluvisc ComplEye. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example products shown in the device section.
Inhaler aids	Where dexterity is an issue, there are aids to help patients grip, actuate or twist their inhaler device. Consider use of a spacer in addition, or whether an alternative device may be better utilised. Many aids available from specific manufacturers.

3. Memory and Cognition ²

Medication compliance is an issue for many patients on occasion. Memory issues for medicines may include taking too many, as well as not enough. Understanding a patient's routine and other sources of help they have is key to making recommendations.

Memory issues may be caused by dementia, mental health, learning disability or other health condition. They may also appear during acute periods of illness on a short-term basis.

Occasional missed or delayed doses	Guidance is available from SPS: Advising on missed or delayed doses of medicines .
Routines	Consider what a patient may do daily that they can link taking their medicines to. Examples might include; brushing teeth, shaving, walking the dog, a TV programme, reading a newspaper.
Simplify the regime	Has the most evidence to support compliance – reducing the number of tablets to take and the number of times/day. Work with the GP if necessary to achieve this. Use a risk/benefit approach to medicines that may usually be given at certain times of the day if they are more likely to be remembered at other times.
Working life & outside of the home	Is the patient at home to take their medication - can timings be adjusted to facilitate this? Consider care settings such as day services, or regular weekly appointments. If retired, what did the patient used to do? E.g. engineers often like a gadget, or administrators may prefer a paper check list.

Positioning of medicines	<p>Consider leaving medicines where they are visible for the time of day that they are needed. Be aware of child and pet safety – including visitors.</p> <p>Morning medicines may need to be separated from night medicines.</p> <p>If medicines cannot be left out – use stickers, reminder prompts, fridge magnets.</p>
Medication reminder chart	<p>A paper-based chart to summarise medicines, what they are for and when to take them. Most PMR systems will generate charts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A template chart can be found on Knowledge NoW (click here to access)
Medication tick charts	<p>Useful for people who may forget they have taken their medicines or who want additional reassurance.</p> <p>A paper-based chart as above but the patient records that they have taken their medication. These charts are available on pharmacy computer systems.</p> <p>Paper based systems such as diaries or calendars can also be helpful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A template chart can be found on Knowledge NoW (click here to access).
Reminder alarms	<p>A variety of standard household alarms may support e.g. alarm clock, oven, mobile phone etc.</p> <p>Consider use of Smart devices e.g. Alexa for regular prompts.</p>
Compliance apps	<p>Click here for a list of apps to support medication compliance.</p>
Telephone reminders	<p>Friends or family may be able to provide these.</p> <p>The Carecalls service (CareCalls - Reminders & Check-ins to Empower Independence) can provide regular reminders and will contact next of kin if there is no response. There is a small monthly charge for this service.</p>
Specific medicines reminder devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example products are shown in the device section.

4. Sensory Impairments	
<p>Sensory impairments impact the way a patient may experience the world around them. Most issues and solutions listed here impact on vision. Sight loss can be experienced in many ways – some people may have limited vision in one or both eyes. Colour-blindness may even be an issue. Ask your patient how they might cope with other tasks within the house to help find a solution</p>	
Large print labels	<p>Fonts such as Arial are recommended for easier reading.</p> <p>Large print labels are a common function of clinical systems.</p>

	<p>It may be easier to print out information on a separate sheet of paper using a version of a reminder chart.</p> <p>Large print should be size 16 minimum, ideally 18.</p> <p>Also consider line and character spacing.</p>
Flag labels	<p>Plastic “flag” labels can be used to create larger spaces for labelling on small bottles such as eye drop bottles.</p>
Placement	<p>Consider placing of medicines in different areas for different times of the day.</p> <p>This can be especially helpful for eye drop bottles which may feel very similar but need using at different times.</p>
Colour contrast	<p>Some people find yellow paper more helpful to read from – this can also include for dyslexia.</p> <p>Avoid supply in multiple “white carton” containers.</p> <p>Colours and shapes of packaging are often used to identify – try not to change brands supplied where possible; or ensure that changes are clearly communicated to the patient.</p>
Colour coding	<p>Coloured dot stickers can be stuck on boxes to indicate what it is for. A colour coded key must be placed on a separate sheet of paper for them to refer to e.g. 2 red stickers for 2 tablets in the morning, 1 blue sticker for 1 tablet at night.</p>
Tactile identifiers	<p>Raised sticker dots can be purchased e.g. Glue Dots or google search “tactile bump dots”, e.g. attach one dot for each tablet to be taken.</p>
Larger diagrams / pictures	<p>Visual images e.g. sun for the morning or moon for at night may be more useful on a reminder chart.</p>
Magnification	<p>Use a magnifying glass or sheet to read labels.</p> <p>Ensure adequate light when reading labels. Some magnifying devices have a built-in light source.</p>
Talking products	<p>A variety of products are available to speak instructions or identify items.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example products are shown in the device sections.
Braille	<p>Do not stick dispensing labels over Braille information on medicines.</p> <p>Be aware that not everyone with vision impairment will be a Braille user.</p>
Braille labeller	<p>Based on a DYMO gun, prints letters and numbers as Braille characters onto a tape which can then be fixed to a carton or bottle.</p>

5. Language, Literacy and Learning, Including Swallowing

Patients may struggle with using their medication through a lack of understanding of directions or requiring support to help translate information.

General understanding	The average reading (literacy) age of the UK population is of a 9-year-old. Complex or confusing directions may lead to medication being taken incorrectly. Ensure full and regular counselling, especially when there are new or changes to medicines. Check for understanding of instructions.
Images / pictograms	Reminder charts using images or pictograms can be more useful than times written as 9am.
Dyslexia	Use of coloured rather than white paper for information or use a coloured reading overlay
Overwhelm	Use a good daily routine to aid adherence and avoid overwhelm. Consider use of white boxes to dispense in, to remove additional working – being mindful of original containers.
Swallowing	Liquid medicines are not always easier to swallow than solid dose forms. For further guidance and ideas see SPS: Swallowing difficulties: supporting adherence
X-PIL	Access patient information leaflets in large/clear print, Braille or audio CD. See: XPIL for more information and how to use.

6. Compliance Aids (for self/family filling)

There are many different types of boxes available for self-filling or by members of family. **Paid home support carers are not allowed to fill these types of aids.**

In line with other factors above, particularly dexterity and vision, choosing the correct type of box is important and may need to try different ones.

Consideration should be given to:

- How much medication is filled or given at a time – options are daily, weekly, or monthly. Also be aware of medication stability – light and moisture sensitivity.
 - Whether it needs to be taken out of the house. Sections are not secure and may become muddled if the box is shaken or dropped.
 - Unintended access to the box by children, pets or other vulnerable people.
 - Use different types of boxes if more than one person in the household requires one.
 - Colours, shapes and textures of the compliance aid.
 - Easy open – some use a button to make the section pop open.
 - Whether an aid with a built in alarm is required.
 - Labelling – keep with a reminder list or repeat prescription list in case information on the medicines is needed e.g. for emergencies.
 - Cognition – understanding which section to use when.
- Example products are shown in the device section.

7. Medicines Compliance Aids MCA (professionally filled)

There are different types of single use compliance aids which are designed to be professionally filled. There are different reasons why each aid might be more appropriate.

The decision to supply an MCA and its suitability for use is with the medication supplier – i.e. pharmacy or dispensing surgery. Other health care professionals should not suggest this option to patients without first discussing with the pharmacy or dispensary.

Care should be taken if switching patients between types of devices, as they are used differently and there is a risk that medication will be taken in the correct order, i.e. working across the pack rather than vertically and vice versa.

Nomad and Venalink are brand names and alternative suppliers of these trays are available.

Nomad Clear



Pack contains a week's medication with up to four times a day dosing. Tablets are removed by punching through the top of the seal.

- Seals are available with different colours which aid with correct identification of time of day.
- Good visual aid of medicines to be taken.
- Film sections are fiddly to remove and slippery, can be tricky for those with larger fingers to manipulate.
- Tablets are removed as you look at the pack, avoiding issues with flipping of the pack

Nomad Duo



Similar to the Nomad Clear with two daily slots, so more suited for those with BD dosing.

- Tablet removal considerations as Nomad Clear.
- Can reduce confusion caused by empty slots.
- Reduced disposable plastic.

Nomad CDS

Outer reusable casing with disposable inner trays. Daily section slider and seals to remove.

- For up to six times a day dosing
- More manipulation required to remove tablets

Venalink



Card and foil-based system. Tablets are taken across the pack in a day, up to four times a day.

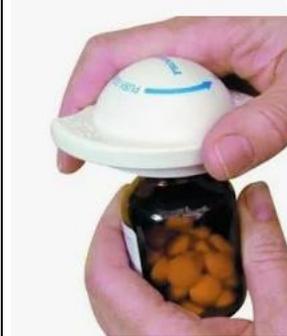
- Risk of dropping tablets when pushed through from the front, as foil requires some pressure to remove.
- If turned over to remove, night and morning meds can get switched.
- Twice daily versions also available.

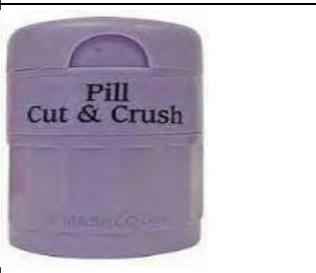
Medication Support Devices

The following pages list some of the medication aids to support patients with their medication. The list is designed to give an indication of what forms of support are available to patients and are not specific recommendations of what is to be used.

Devices can be searched on the internet for purchase i.e. through Google. Where a product is available directly, the links have been provided and are correct at the time of writing this document. If you are a company who produce medication support devices and you would like to be included in this document, please contact nwcb.medsqueries@nhs.net so we can make any updates.

The website Living Made Easy (<https://livingmadeeasy.org.uk/category/health-and-personal-care/personal-health-aids/medication-organisers-and-dispensers>) has been a useful reference site for compiling this guide, but is not affiliated to the ICB in any way.

Dexterity	
	Pill Punchers For removal of tablets and capsules from foil blister strips.
	PillPress For removal of tablets and capsules from blister packaging and will catch tablets within the integrated well of the device.
	Bottle openers Internal grip fits the bottle top while the outer surface fits comfortably in your hand. Some specifically for use with child resistant lids, others for plain tops. Similarly, rubber or silicon grip pads may also be of use.

	<p>Personal Poppitt</p> <p>Device to remove tablets and capsules from blister strip packaging. Helps those with poor dexterity or strength in the fingers e.g. due to arthritis.</p> <p>https://www.poppitts.com/personalpoppitt</p>
	<p>Pill cutters</p> <p>A small blade precisely cuts the pill placed in a slot when the lid is closed, providing a more accurate split than hand-cutting or knives.</p>
	<p>Pill crushers</p> <p>Screw turn crusher to powder tablets.</p> <p>Always check suitability of medicines for crushing prior to administration.</p>
	<p>Pil-Bob</p> <p>Designed to make removal from a blister pack easier – helps to pierce the paper foil and catch the tablets as they are removed.</p>

Eye drop aids	
	<p>Some of these devices can be used with multiple types of eye drop bottles, and some are specific.</p> <p>For further information please refer to this guidance produced by Moorfields: https://uk-oa.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Eye_drop_compliance_aids.pdf</p> <p>Some devices are currently listed in the Drug Tariff for supply on prescription:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ComplEye • eyGuide • Opticare • Opticare Arthro 5 and 10

	<p>Eye drop aids will require occasional cleaning and replacement and manufacturers recommendations should be followed.</p>
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Sensory Devices

 <p>The image shows a white rectangular voice recorder with a green circular button. Next to it is its packaging, which is green and white and labeled 'Talking Labels' and 'Voice Recordable'.</p>	<p>The Talking Label voice recorder Provides audible guidance when you need to identify and take medication. Clips to the medication box.</p> <p>Talking Labels - Medication Management Labelling Solutions - Blind – Talking Products Ltd</p>
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Memory aids

 <p>The image shows a black digital watch with a black strap. The watch face displays 'INSULIN' at the top, '8:00' in the center, and 'ALERT' at the bottom.</p>	<p>Cadex VibraPlus watch</p> <p>Set up multiple daily alarms with messaging.</p>
 <p>The image shows a white, cylindrical pill bottle with a digital display on top. The display shows 'LAST OPENED' and 'AM 5:52'. There are buttons labeled 'CHECK', 'MODE', 'DOWN', and 'UP'.</p>	<p>Timecap Pill Bottle</p> <p>Pill bottle with timer, shows when last opened and reminder alarms. Fits onto a standard pill bottle.</p>
 <p>The image shows a blue, circular pill dispenser with a digital display. It is shown next to its lid, which is also blue and has a transparent window. Two small red and yellow capsules are visible next to the dispenser.</p>	<p>Minitell</p> <p>Portable device with five sections – audible and vibrating alarm. Sections twist to remove tablets.</p>
 <p>The image shows a white and blue pill box with a digital display on top. The box is open, showing several compartments containing pills. A blue sliding cover is partially visible.</p>	<p>Pill Box with Reminder Alarm</p> <p>Sliding pill compartment, digital display. Audible and vibration alarms.</p>



Pivotell dispensers

Holds 29 sections of medication lasting from 28 days (for once daily dosing) to 7 days (for four times a day dosing).

Numerous models including smart devices that link to SMS or push messaging.

Tipper device available for those who struggle to tip upside down.

Compliance aids for self-filling

A selection of these types of devices are shown below (see Living Made Easy website for more details <https://livingmadeeasy.org.uk/category/health-and-personal-care/personal-health-aids/medication-organisers-and-dispensers>)



References

¹ [Manual dexterity: supporting adherence – NHS SPS - Specialist Pharmacy Service – The first stop for professional medicines advice](#)

² [Reminding to take medicines: supporting adherence – NHS SPS - Specialist Pharmacy Service – The first stop for professional medicines advice](#)