NHS
Suffolk and
North East Essex

Medicines Expiry Date Guidelines for Care Homes

Examples of different wording of expiry dates

Wording on Packaging	Definition
Use before end of January 2025	Discard 31st January 2025
Use by January 2025	Discard 31st December 2024
Best before January 2025	Discard 31st December 2024
Discard after January 2025	Discard 31st January 2025
Expires January 2025	Discard 31st January 2025
Use within one month of opening	Self-explanatory
Discard 7 days after opening	Self-explanatory

FORMULATION	EXPIRY DETAILS	COMMENTS
Tablets & capsules - stored in manufacturer's original packaging	**Foil strips:** Manufacturer's expiry **Bottles:** Manufacturer's expiry - some products may have a shorter expiry after opening. Check patient information leaflet for details.	Medicines kept for use in the next cycle should be recorded in the 'carried forward' section of the MAR chart
Tablets & capsules - decanted from original packaging into bottles by pharmacy	6 months from dispensing date unless otherwise specified on the label	Medicines kept for use in the next cycle should be recorded in the 'carried forward' section of the MAR chart
Tablets & capsules - stored in Multi-Compartment Compliance Aid	8 weeks from dispensing date unless otherwise specified on the label	
Oral liquids - stored in original container	6 months from date of opening **or** manufacturer's recommendation if shorter	Write **DATE** of opening on dispensing label. Medicines kept for use in the next cycle should be recorded in the 'carried forward' section of the MAR chart
External liquids	6 months from date of opening or manufacturer's recommendation if shorter	Write **DATE** of opening on dispensing label
Emollients - in pump dispensers/tubs/jars/tubes	**Tubs with lids** should be disposed of 1 month after opening. **All others** can be disposed of 3 months from date of opening **or** manufacturer's recommendation if shorter	All emollients should be for named residents. Write **DATE** of opening on dispensing label
Eye/ear/nose drops or ointments	1 month from date of opening **or** manufacturer's recommendation if shorter	Write **DATE** of opening on dispensing label on bottle/tube
Nasal sprays	3 months from date of opening **or** manufacturer's recommendation if shorter	Write **DATE** of opening on dispensing label on bottle
Inhalers	Manufacturer's expiry	Be aware of different preparations shelf-life following dispensing. Check patient information leaflet to confirm expiry and disposal information.
Insulin	**Unopened stored in fridge:** Manufacturer's expiry **Opened stored at room temperature:** 4 weeks	Write **DATE** of opening on pen/cartridge. One pen/cartridge will often be sufficient for 1 month

References

1. Bristol CCG. Expiry date guidelines for care homes with nursing. September 2016.
2. Sutton CCG. Standard Operating Procedure for shelf-lives of medicines in care homes within NHS Sutton CCG.
3. Rotheram CCG. Good Practice Guidance on Expiry dates of medicines. October 2016.
4. Herts Valley CCG & East and North Hertfordshire CCG. Reducing medicines waste in care homes.
5. NHS Devon Caring for Care Homes Guidance sheet, 12 Storage and Expiry Dates.

Produced by Suffolk and North East Essex Medicines Optimisation Teams
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