

Medicine Matters Covid-19 Special Bulletin (2)

South Tyneside

North of England
Commissioning Support
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Medicines information for care staff in care homes

Paracetamol supplies – management of stocks in care homes

A number of care homes have been enquiring whether it is possible to use paracetamol stocks that would usually be placed for disposal.

Currently, under the Human Medicine Regulations, when medicines are supplied to an individual against a prescription, they are the property of the individual, for the sole use of that person, and cannot be used by or for someone else.

Given the current situation and difficulties in some cases in obtaining paracetamol, it is crucial that we do not dispose of paracetamol unnecessarily in line with the waste reduction guidance.

General principles to follow:

Many care homes may follow the policy that any regular medicines that remain at the end of a medicine cycle should be placed for disposal (either via the waste management company for homes providing nursing care or via the pharmacy for homes providing residential personal care). This has previously often been the case for medicines supplied in blister packs/ monitored dosage systems (MDS) by the pharmacy. However, increasingly medicines are supplied in original containers (boxes and bottles) which usually include the manufacturer's expiry date - on the box, the manufacturers label, the strip packaging etc.

There has been a lot of work recently regarding ensuring that appropriate stock levels are in place for all medicines to minimise unnecessary waste – often a consideration during medicine reviews. In addition, care home staff are recommended to consider “carrying forward” stocks of medicines which are prescribed on an as required basis if the medicine is still prescribed for the person and the supplies have not reached their expiry date.

We are now asking that care home staff further support the effort to minimise medicine waste, in particular paracetamol, by making a concerted effort to use existing stocks of medicine rather than placing unused medicines at the end of the medicine monthly cycle, for disposal.

This should be the case for both regular medicines and when required medicines and should be a particular priority for paracetamol given the current stock difficulties.

Can the care home use prescribed paracetamol that is no longer needed for other residents?

It is recognized that these are exceptional times in which the whole of the health and social care system are adapting quickly to new situations and problems day by day whilst working to ensure that people (patients, staff and public) are safe.

Exceptional circumstances:

South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) supports care homes in their locality in the re-use supplies of paracetamol that are no longer required for one patient, as a homely remedy for other patient(s) if this is required due to the exceptional circumstances we find ourselves in during the COVID 19 pandemic.

This will require care homes to have:

- a completed risk assessment
- a robust checking process to ensure the paracetamol is suitable for use
- assurance regarding where the medicine has been stored since being supplied by the pharmacy or hospital (i.e. this arrangement is not suitable for supplies brought in from home where suitable storage can't be accounted for)
- a clear, auditable recording system for any doses administered from the stock
- ensure that staff have, and follow clear protocols for use of the paracetamol supplies
- that **the use of this protocol is time limited for the duration of this crisis only**

What about CQC or Local Authority contracts teams?

The CQC pharmacist and the Local Authority contracts teams have been made aware of this temporary arrangement and understand that it the recommendations are in response to the exceptional circumstances arising due to Coronavirus (Covid 19).

Page 2 of this bulletin has references to supporting documents that may help in the implementation of this interim guidance.

The Medicines Optimisation Website

Information, guidance documents and various medicine related tools are accessible via our website. These can be downloaded and many may be adjusted to suit your needs. **NECS Medicines Optimisation website:**

<https://medicines.necsu.nhs.uk/category/resources/care-homes/>

RE-use of paracetamol products – useful information

The following are suggested template documents that may help in the implementation of this guidance:

- Example of stock management form for re-use of Paracetamol during the Covid 19 pandemic
See Example 1 in attachments
- Example of a health care professional advice form:
See Example 2 in attachments

<https://medicines.necsu.nhs.uk/necs-good-practice-guidance-and-tools-for-care-homes/>

What else do you need to do?

- You will also need to ensure there is a completed risk assessment for the reuse of unwanted paracetamol
 - Use the usual care home's risk assessment tool
- Ensure all staff understand that this is an interim arrangement and ONLY for paracetamol
 - only staff who would usually undertake medicine related activities should be following this new process (i.e. usual processes for training and competencies or delegated tasks) as per the medicine policy within the care home

Further information about management of homely remedies and OTC preparations is available via:

- CQC website <https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/adult-social-care/over-counter-medicines-homely-remedies>
- NICE guidance: <https://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/SC1>

Please ensure consideration is given to minimising unnecessary waste medicines in your care home. This is always an important issue but is paramount during these current times.

It is anticipated that further national guidance will follow about re-use of medicines in care homes during this exceptional time of the Coronavirus19 Pandemic. More information will be shared with care homes as this guidance is published.

Note from the Medicine Optimisation Team: we intend to produce further guidance bulletins in response to common questions arising regarding medicines in care homes or other social care settings

Please continue to refer to current guidance UK government guidance
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

If you have any questions regarding this newsletter or if you have an idea for an article to be included in a future issue, please contact us on Tel: 0191 2172558 where you will be forwarded to the most appropriate member of the team

Please don't forget to share this newsletter with your colleagues!