

Time Critical Medication

Timely administration of medicines is a key aspect of person-centred care across all care settings. A delayed or missed dose of a Time Critical Medication (TCM) can result in harm, including exacerbation of symptoms, development of complications and increased mortality, as well as increased length of hospital stay and increased NHS costs.

The Safer Use of Time Critical Medicines Programme is part of NHS England's Medicines Safety Improvement Programme.

Which medicines are time critical?

- A** Antimicrobials
- M** Mental health – lithium and antipsychotics especially clozapine
- M** Movement disorders - Parkinson's / Myasthenia medication
- I** Immunomodulators including HIV medication
- S** Sugar – diabetes medication
- S** Steroids – Addison's and adrenal insufficiency
- E** Epilepsy - anticonvulsants
- D** Direct Oral Anticoagulants (DOACs) and warfarin

A MISSED dose can harm your patients!

All health and social care staff should help to ensure that people prescribed medicines for these conditions do not miss or have delayed doses. Delayed or missed doses can happen due to problems with the processes for prescribing, availability, communication or administration across all health care settings.

Recommendations for different care settings

Ensuring people receive TCMs on time involves the whole multidisciplinary team, patients and carers. All staff should be aware of the importance of TCMs and the conditions included using **A MISSED** as a reminder.

General practice and community pharmacy

- Ensure all staff are aware of the importance of TCMs and the conditions involved so any urgent prescription requests can be prioritised.
- Support people to understand their medicines and the importance of taking the doses at the correct time.
- Ensure the patient medication record is up to date and includes the times of administration (e.g. for Parkinson's Disease medicines).
- If there are any supply problems with TCMs and a person is at risk of missing doses, good communication between the community pharmacy and the GP practice enables a suitable alternative medication supply in a timely manner.

Medicines Safety Tablet Press Extra

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NHS Northamptonshire ICB

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Care facilities and domiciliary care

- Ensure all staff are aware of the importance of TCMs and the conditions involved.
- Identify any people prescribed TCMs and ensure their care plan shows how they will receive their medicines at the correct times.
- Support people to self-administer their medicines where possible using the appropriate assessment in the service's medicine policy.
- Contact the GP practice or community pharmacy if there are any problems or queries with administration of TCMs.
- In instances of transfer of care e.g. into hospital or an outpatient clinic, or day leave e.g. family day out, ensure that TCMs are available for the person to take at the correct time(s). Staff should follow procedures for this in the medicine policy.

Ambulance service

- Where possible identify people prescribed TCMs and ensure they take their own medicines to hospital with them.
- When handing over patients to other care settings, alert staff of anyone prescribed TCMs, when the last dose was taken, and when the next dose is due.

A&E

- At triage, check if people usually take TCMs.
- Ensure medications are prescribed in a timely way so that doses can be administered on time.
- If the person does not have their own medicines and the TCM is not stock, ensure the hospital pharmacy are contacted for an urgent supply.
- Display posters to empower people to inform staff if they usually take TCMs. [RCEM](#) have posters available.

Hospital wards and pharmacy department

- Ensure medications are prescribed in a timely way so that doses can be administered on time.
- If the person does not have their own medicines and the TCM is not stock, ensure the hospital pharmacy are contacted for an urgent supply.
- Empower people to inform staff if they usually take TCMs. [RCEM](#) have posters available.
- Consider systems to ensure doses due between standard medicine round times are not missed e.g. timers, alerts.
- Support people to self-administer their medicines where possible.
- Support people to understand their medicines and any changes made during their inpatient care and on discharge.
- Hospital pharmacy staff will provide advice if the person cannot take their usual medicines (e.g. alternative routes of administration, considering deprescribing).

This edition is also available on the Primary Care Portal

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Resources

- Royal College of Emergency Medicine [Time Critical Medicines National Quality Improvement Programme.](#)
- Parkinson's UK [Time critical medication and Get It On Time campaign resources.](#)
- CQC [Time Sensitive Medicines](#)
- Specialist Pharmacy Services [Safer Use of Time Critical Medicines](#)
- Health Services Safety Investigation Body [Medication not given: administration of time critical medication in the emergency department](#)
- NHS Futures [Medication Safety Across the System \(MSATS\) workspace](#)
- NHS England [Medicines Safety Improvement Programme](#)

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The information in this bulletin is believed to be accurate at publication. The information contained represents the interpretation of the contributors from Northamptonshire ICB and does not override the individual responsibility of health and social care professionals to make decisions appropriate to local need and the circumstances of individual patients