



Managing medication

A guide to assist health and social care workers in conversations with people

Supplying medicines in their original packaging is always the first option considered. Repackaging some medicines into another system may affect their effectiveness and safety. Sometimes, keeping medication in its original packaging is not the best option. This leaflet will explore these issues further.

What are the options available to manage medication?

Below are some common issues that stop people from taking their medicines themselves. Listed are some options to help with these. Please note every option may not be available at the local pharmacy and charges may apply. This list is not exhaustive.

Ability to open containers/use medicines

Large containers	These have a larger lid to improve grip in opening containers
Easy open tops	Non child resistant tops can be requested by you and agreed with the pharmacist
Winged caps	Non child resistant tops with a wing attachment that is easier to open
Pill press/pill poppet (available to purchase)	Devices that help medicines to be pushed out of blister packs- the wrong end of a teaspoon can also be used to do this
Eye drop dispensers	Available on prescription to help use eye drops
Inhaler aids	Aids to help you grip, trigger or twist inhaler device

Memory

Medication reminder chart	A paper-based chart to summarise medicines, what they are for and when to take them
Medication tick charts	A paper-based chart as above but you record when you have taken your tablets
Reminder alarms	Electronic devices are available to assist
Simplify regimen	Work with your surgery or pharmacist to simplify your medication e.g. change to once-a-day regimen

Visual Impairment

Colour coding	Coloured dots can be stuck on your medicines to indicate what it is for
Large print labels	You can ask your Pharmacy to do this for you
Tactile identifiers	You can attach something to the tablet box e.g. elastic band, staples, tear in the lid of the box
Larger diagrams/pictures	You can draw/attach pictures onto the box to signify when a tablet is to be taken e.g. sun for the morning or moon for at night
Magnifying glass	You can purchase a suitable magnifying glass to help you read labels and packaging
Braille	You can ask your pharmacy about the options they have for supplying your tablets with Braille



There are plenty of tips and tricks to help remember medications. Have you considered downloadable apps? See the following list of some of the free apps that are available to download.

Medisafe pill reminder

Medisafe pill reminder is known for being user-friendly with a sleek design. The app offers personalized reminders for each day. Also, important warnings, missed medication alerts, refill reminders and family scheduling tools. That way you and a caregiver will get notifications.

Mango Health

Besides managing medications, Mango Health users can track their health through this app. You can create a schedule of healthy habits and the app offers helpful reminders. Some healthy goals include: taking medications on time, remembering to check vital signs. The app also lets you set up reminders and receive alerts when it's time to take medication.

MyTherapy medication reminder and pill tracker

MyTherapy is an app designed to aid you in staying in control of your health. The app includes customized pill reminders, measurement tracking, and health and exercise alerts. Helpful overview charts will help users to track patterns and aid in future goal setting.

Pill Reminder All in One

This simple app allows users to track their medications and set reminders to take them. You can also set reminders for any appointments. Pill Reminder All in One even lets you email reports to doctors straight from the app.

Ask for help

If there are problems with managing medication, then contact the GP surgery for a review. There are many healthcare professionals available who can support with a structured medication review. Most surgeries will also have an in-house pharmacist. Following the review, the community pharmacy can discuss options to help manage medication safely.



What are medication compliance aids?

Medication compliance aids are containers that are filled with medication. They are designed to help to manage medicines.

There are different medication compliance aids to help manage medicines. **NONE** of these aids will guarantee that medication can be taken independently. Community pharmacies may agree to fill certain devices if appropriate.

Is a Medication Compliance Aid the right choice?

Common problems with Medication Compliance Aids:

Community pharmacies are not required to supply medicines in a Medication Compliance Aid. They may charge for providing medicines in a Medication Compliance Aid. A small number of patients may qualify for a free Medication Compliance Aid - ask the community pharmacy.

Not all medicines are suitable for supply in a Medication Compliance Aid. If a patient has some medicines in a Medication Compliance Aid and some that are not this could create more confusion and missed medicines. For example, medicines that are outside of the Medication Compliance Aid may be forgotten.

Medication Compliance Aids have fixed times of day for when medicines are taken. They cannot accommodate specific dosing instructions. For example, medicines to be taken on an empty stomach or with food are often in same section.

Medicines within a Medication Compliance Aid are removed from their manufacturers packaging. This can impact on their stability. Also placing several medications together makes each medicine difficult to identify. This may lead to adverse effects or loss of effectiveness.

When deciding the best option to manage medication ask the following:

- Can routines and reminders be used to prompt?
- Has a structured medication review been done?

Remember that a blister pack may not be the best option.

Can a pill box be filled by individual, family member or another informal carer?

If YES, a Self-fill pill box/dosette may be the right choice

If NO, a blister pack may be a more suitable option.

For both options it is important to consider:

- Can they select medication from the correct compartment?
- Can they remove medication from the compartment?
- Do they understand how the Medication Compliance Aid is to be used?

In some cases, a care worker may be required to help you manage medicines safely. You can contact Social Care to see if eligible for a funded Care Package if you also have other care needs. Alternatively contact Age UK in your local area for further information. There may be a charge for this support.

What are the different types of Medication Compliance Aids?

Blister pack (Pharmacy filled sealed packs)

Pros

- Can help when there are lots of medicines to take
- Can provide reassurance 'have I taken my medicines today?'

Cons

- Cannot remind you to take medicines
- Need to know what time and day it is
- There may be more suitable alternatives
- Can lead to wastage/increased costs if not used correctly or when medicines change
- Pharmacies are not required to provide medicines in blister packs
- You may need to pay the pharmacy to put your medicines into a blister pack
- Not able to know if medicines should be taken with or after food
- Medicines that are outside of the blister pack may be forgotten
- Single use packs negatively impact environment



Self-fill pill boxes/dosettes

- Often started without a full assessment when other types of support/help may be better



Pros

- Used by person to organise medicines so not having to do this every day
- Any changes can be made straight away
- Can simplify complex regimens
- Can provide reassurance 'have I taken my medicines today?'

Cons

- Cannot remind you to take medicines
- Need to know what time and day it is
- Accuracy dependent on person filling it
- Not all medication stable to be added
- Not able to know if medicines should be taken with or after food



Automated medication dispenser

Pros

- Prompt you to take medicines by using alarms or flashing lights
- Can be linked to CareLink pendent alarms
- Can prompt you several times a day
- Reduces risk of taking too much medicine as only one dose can be removed at a time
- Tipper stand available if required



Cons

- Set up costs can be high (£120-150)
- Require battery changes
- Can be difficult to use if people are confused and they may find alarms distressing
- Risk of device failure
- Most pharmacies will not fill these devices due to safety concerns

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