

Missed & Delayed Doses of Medication in Care Homes

Guidance to support care home staff when considering actions after a dose of medication is missed or delayed. Medication may not be taken at the prescribed time which can cause problems. Missing a dose may make the medicine less effective. Taking subsequent doses too close together can increase the risk of side effects. In this guidance, a missed dose is one that was not taken before the next dose was due, and a delayed dose is when the administration of a medicine occurs two hours or more after the prescribed time. This guidance does not cover residents who refuse their medication or those who vomit shortly after taking it. *Please note, if doses are missed regularly or if harm is caused by the omission of medication doses, this is a safeguarding issue and will need to be reported to the regulator.*

A missed dose of medication should never be doubled at the next medication time – this could be harmful

Action to Take Following a Missed or Delayed Dose of Medication

Missed or delayed doses can occur, e.g. when a resident has forgotten to take or be given medication, they were asleep at the time medication was due or were away from the care home at medication time e.g. at an appointment.

Refer to the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) supplied with the medication for guidance. Any PIL can be downloaded from <https://www.medicines.org.uk/EMC/> or <https://www.gov.uk/pil-spc>

Less than 2 hours late:*

Usually acceptable for most oral medicines to be taken up to 2 hours late. At this point it is more important to take the dose than adhere to warnings e.g. before or after meals.

More than 2 hours late AND taken once or twice a day:*

Take the dose as soon as remembered if the next dose is not due within a few hours. Then continue as prescribed. The definition of a "few hours" will vary with each situation.

Seek further advice if unsure.

More than 2 hours late AND taken frequently through the day*

Usually advised to omit the missed dose, wait until the next dose is due, then continue as prescribed e.g. this advice would apply to an antibiotic or painkiller taken four times per day.

*This is guidance only. It is applicable to resident's who only miss occasional doses

- Record on the MAR chart the medicine missed and the reason. If it was given at a different time, ensure this is clearly documented. The next dose time may need to be adjusted to ensure a safe time interval between doses.
- If more information is needed or staff are in doubt, particularly if more than one day of treatment has been missed, contact the GP or pharmacist. Record advice given and any additional action or follow-up monitoring required.
- At shift change during handover, discuss any missed or delayed medication, including outstanding actions.
- Outside of standard working hours contact NHS 111 for advice.

Other Considerations

- Ask the GP or Care Home Support Pharmacist to review a person's medicines if their routine leads to frequently missed doses e.g., asleep prior to night-time medicines administration, regular unplanned visits.
- Report, audit and share learning if the missed dose was a result of an incident or error.
- Care home policy should state a time frame for notifying the GP or Out of Hours service of a missed or delayed dose. If the resident's condition deteriorates, the GP or Out of Hours service should be contacted sooner.

What about Critical Medication? (includes common examples, not an exhaustive list)

- Administration of **time critical medication** should **NEVER** be or delayed or missed E.g. Parkinson's medication, insulin, medication used in emergency situations
- Administration of other **critical medication** should **NEVER** be missed. Delays may not cause harm but may affect future management (further doses may require dose time adjustment, additional monitoring may be needed). E.g. anticoagulants, antipsychotics, anti-infectives, methotrexate, immunotherapy & cancer drugs, epilepsy drugs
- Record missed or delayed doses as resident safety incidents in accordance with your care home policy.
- Consider highlighting in resident's MAR chart and care plan that they are taking a critical medication

For support, call the Care Home Medicines Support Line: 0300 303 0227 (Mon-Fri 9am-4.30pm, excluding BH)