

Refrigerated Medicines in Care Homes

This is to be used as guidance on the processes and procedures that should be in place to ensure safe storage of medicines that require refrigeration.

[Storing medicines in fridges in care homes - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk/storing-medicines-in-fridges-in-care-homes)

Read: Read temperatures daily
Record: Record temperatures and sign on a standard form
Reset: Reset thermometer after each temperature reading
React: React by taking action if temperature is outside +2°C to +8°C and document the action

Fridge Requirements:

- Medication that needs to be refrigerated should be stored in a separate and secure fridge that is **only** for medicines i.e., do not keep any food or pathology samples in a 'medicines' fridge'. (*In exceptional circumstances, for very small care homes with very few medicines that require refrigeration, a lockable container within a food fridge is acceptable. This is a proportionate approach to making sure medicines are safe to use and should be fully risk assessed.*)
- The fridge should either be locked or kept in a locked medicines room. Staff should be aware of key storage and access.
- Check that the fridge electricity supply plug socket is clearly labelled, so that it does not inadvertently get switched.
- All fridges where medicines are stored should be serviced at least annually.
- When medicines requiring refrigeration are received within the home they should be immediately identified and placed in the 'medicines' fridge'
- Store medicines in an orderly fashion on shelves, not on the base of the unit, or in the door. Avoid overfilling the fridge and keep a space between boxes and vials for proper air circulation.
- Do not keep large amounts of medicines in the fridge as this can lead to inadequate air flow and potential freezing. Medicines should not touch the cooling plate in the back of the fridge.
- Ensure fridge medications are regularly date checked and the stock rotated.
- All fridges should be cleaned as part of the general cleaning rota and dated records kept. Domestic fridges (that are not self-defrosting) should be defrosted regularly and dated records kept. The care home medicines policy should state where the fridge contents should be refrigerated whilst cleaning takes place.
- Specialised refrigerators are available for the storage of pharmaceutical products and must be used for vaccines and diluents. Vaccines must **not** be stored in domestic refrigerators.

Thermometer Requirements:

The 'medicines' fridge' must be monitored using a thermometer which measures both the **minimum & maximum** temperature. The thermometer temperature monitoring probes should be sited in a central location within the fridge, preferably between the products - not in the door.

Daily temperature recording:

- The fridge temperature should be checked and recorded daily. It is recommended that the minimum and maximum temperatures and the current temperature are all recorded.
- The fridge temperature must be kept between the **range of +2°C and +8°C**. If the fridge temperature is outside of this range, action should be taken immediately.
- Staff taking the thermometer readings must demonstrate understanding of how to read and reset the thermometer and why this is necessary.
- Ensure that it is clear in the care home medicines policy where medicines should be stored (in an emergency) if the fridge malfunctions.
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What to do when the fridge temperature is out of range of +2°C and +8°C

- Inform the care home manager immediately.
- While advice is sought, quarantine (separate and put in a safe place) the affected fridge stock by bagging and labelling as 'Not for Use'. Store in a designated fridge, ideally an alternative medicines fridge.
- Attach a notice to the malfunctioning fridge clearly stating, 'Do Not Use'.
- Estimate how many hours the fridge has been out of range (you should have the reading from the previous day's check).
- Contact your Community Pharmacy provider for advice.
- If you are advised that the stock is no longer usable, ensure that it is disposed of promptly in line with procedures.
- Contact the GP to explain what has happened and request replacement medicines, if required.
- Speak to an appropriate person to arrange the repair or replacement of the fridge.
- Record the action taken on the fridge temperature record sheet.

Medicines Refrigerator Temperature Record Sheet

- **The fridge temperature must be kept between the range of +2°C and +8°C.**
- Check and record the readings daily.
- If the fridge temperature is outside the recommended range, take appropriate action immediately as per care home medicines policy.

Month _____ Year _____

Date	Time of Reading	Current Fridge Temp °C	Minimum Temp °C	Maximum Temp °C	Thermometer reset (tick)	Signature	Comments
1st							
2nd							
3rd							
4th							
5th							
6th							
7th							
8th							
9th							
10th							
11th							
12th							
13th							
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22nd							
23rd							
24th							
25th							
26th							
27th							
28th							
29th							
30th							
31st							

Date of when the fridge was last cleaned and defrosted: _____