

Good Practice Guidance for Care Homes: Fridge Temperature Monitoring

Introduction

Certain medicines must be stored in a refrigerator. This is because at room temperature these medications may break down or may become less effective. When storing your residents' medicines, it is important that you are aware of specific requirements involved as stated in the manufacturer's guidance.

Medicines stored at room temperature must be stored below 25°C.

Medicines needing refrigeration, must be stored between +2°C and +8°C.

If you are unsure of the storage requirements of a medication, more information can be found in the electronic medicines compendium (emc) at: www.medicines.org.uk/emc/

Fridge requirements and monitoring

- If you have a resident who is on a regular medicine which requires refrigeration e.g. insulin, there should be a designated medicines fridge with a locking device to store that medicine safely and securely.
- If you don't have any residents with regularly prescribed medicines requiring refrigeration, it may not be necessary to have a medicines fridge. A small lockable box can be kept on the top shelf of the food fridge to store 'one off' medicines.
Only medicines trained staff should have access to medications. Good food hygiene should also be maintained.
- When receiving a medicine delivery, ensure the fridge items are put away promptly
- The fridge temperature needs to be maintained between +2°C and +8°C. Should temperatures fall outside of this range, immediate action should be taken (see below).
- To avoid the fridge being switched off accidentally, use a switchless socket or label the plug with a '**Do not unplug/switch off**' notice.
- Daily fridge temperature monitoring, using a minimum and maximum thermometer, should be recorded (Appendix 1- Fridge temperature recording sheet). Records should include staff initials for audit trail purposes.
- You should:
 - Record the current temperature reading of the fridge
 - Record the maximum reading
 - Record the minimum reading
 - Reset the thermometer after each daily temperature check.
- Ensure the thermometer/ temperature monitoring probe is situated in a central location within the fridge. It should not be placed in the door.
- If you are reading the fridge temperatures make sure you:
 - Know how the thermometer works
 - Know how to reset the thermometer after you have taken your readings
 - Understand why this is necessary.
- Do not overfill the fridge; this stops adequate airflow and can lead to potential freezing.
- Check stock and expiry dates of fridge line medications regularly and ensure stock is rotated.
- Clean and defrost your medicines fridge regularly; keep records of when this is done.

Author and Version:	Frimley CCG MOCH Team - Version 1	Date Ratified:	15 th September 2021
Committee Ratified:	Medicines Optimisation Group (MOG)	Review Date:	September 2024

What to do if your fridge temperature has gone out of range?

- Inform the care home manager/ medication lead immediately.
- Quarantine any stock:
 - into a plastic bag/box
 - mark the stock '**quarantined, do not use**'
 - transfer the quarantined stock to a different fridge.
- Put a note on the fridge door stating '**out of range**' so staff are aware it is not currently in use.
- If you do not have another fridge to transfer the quarantined stock into, place all stock in a plastic bag/box, mark the stock '**quarantined, do not use**' and keep it in the original fridge.
- Make an estimation (use the previous day's information from the temperature recording sheet) how long the fridge has been out of temperature range.
- You may need to speak to your local pharmacy or the manufacturer to get information about whether the product is safe to use. The manufacturer's number can be found by searching for the medication at www.medicines.org.uk/emc/
- Unusable medication should be disposed of using the usual process (refer to Good Practice Guidance: Disposal of medicines).
- Stock should be reordered from the GP practice promptly.
- Record all actions on the fridge temperature recording sheet (Appendix 1).
- If necessary, call out an engineer to repair the fridge.

References

- North East Hampshire and Farnham CCG Good practice for Care Homes Guidance sheets. November 2018
- CQC Storing medicines in fridges in care homes
<https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/adult-social-care/storing-medicines-fridges-care-homes>
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society Professional guidance on the safe and secure handling of medicines
<https://www.rpharms.com/recognition/setting-professional-standards/safe-and-secure-handling-of-medicines/professional-guidance-on-the-safe-and-secure-handling-of-medicines>
- Electronic medicines compendium
<https://www.medicines.org.uk/>
- Caring for Care Homes Guidance sheets: Fridge Temperature Monitoring. Northern, Eastern and Western Devon CCG. Medicines Management Team. Published November 2018

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