

# MANAGING ACUTE / URGENT PRESCRIPTIONS IN CARE HOMES

## KEY POINTS

This guidance is intended to help ensure that residents in care homes receive urgent, acute medications in a timely manner.

An 'acute' one-off prescription is for a medicine that the person has not had before or does not take regularly. It is not usually listed on the GP repeat prescription.

An example of an acute prescription would be a course of antibiotics, for example, to treat a chest infection. The treatment is usually for a specified time interval such as five or seven days.

**Acute prescriptions should be started by the resident as soon as possible and at least within 24 hours.** Delayed or interrupted treatment could make a person ill or delay recovery. For example, delayed treatment with antibiotics could mean that an infection gets worse or may even result in a hospital admission.

## TOP TIPS FOR CARE HOME STAFF

**Please continue to follow any processes already set up with your regular pharmacy to inform them of the acute / urgent prescription.**

If a prescription is issued at the care home by the GP electronically (via EPS), care home staff **should inform the pharmacy (as per local arrangement) of the urgent nature of the acute prescription and confirm that the medication will be delivered in a timely manner** as the pharmacy will not be aware of the acute prescription.

If the prescription has been written by hand, care home staff should either collect the prescription or arrange for the regular pharmacy to collect and dispense the medication in a timely manner.

If the regular community pharmacy cannot supply the medication or it is outside the 'cut-off' time, it is recommended the care home has an arrangement with a local pharmacy for urgent prescriptions to be dispensed to ensure that the treatment is started on the same day.

If no pharmacy can supply the medication, then the GP should be informed so that an alternative can be prescribed.

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Good Practice Guidance documents are believed to accurately reflect the literature at the time of writing. However, users should always consult the literature and take account of new developments because these may affect this guidance

# Useful contacts



East and North  
Hertfordshire

Clinical Commissioning Group

East and North Hertfordshire CCG Care Home Pharmacy Team  
Tel: (01707) 685000 or email: ENHCCG.vanguardpharmacists@nhs.net

If a medication supply for a resident does not arrive as expected, check with the community pharmacy whether they have received the prescription.

**Communicate any information about expected prescriptions or delays to supply at each shift change.**

If an acute medicine is handwritten on the MAR chart, this should be double-signed for accuracy.

## TOP TIPS FOR GP / PRACTICE STAFF

If a prescription is issued at the practice, the prescriber/practice must inform the care home that an urgent prescription has been issued for the resident. Reception staff should also be made aware in case of any queries.

**Please continue to follow any processes already set up with the care home / pharmacy to inform them of the acute / urgent prescription.**

For urgent EPS prescriptions, if the nominated pharmacy has been altered to a local pharmacy, then the **nomination should be changed back** to the usual pharmacy to ensure further prescriptions are sent to this pharmacy.

When an 'acute' prescription is started, the treatment duration must be clearly communicated and documented.

If a hand-written prescription has been issued by the GP while at the care home, it is good practice to make a note of the acute prescriptions on the patient clinical record as soon as possible after the visit if there is no access to the clinical system whilst at the care home.

## TOP TIPS FOR COMMUNITY PHARMACY STAFF

**Please ensure that notification process is in place with care home / GP practice when an acute / urgent medication is prescribed to ensure that treatment is started as soon as possible. This should include any acute prescriptions from the hospital or community provider.**

Acute prescriptions should be commenced within 24 hours. Make sure care home staff are aware if there will be a delay in supply.

For long term shortages ensure that care home staff and the GP are aware so an alternative may be prescribed.

Care home staff should be directed to Community Pharmacies providing the 'Immediate Access to Emergency Medicines Service' if this would allow a more timely supply of an urgent medication (included within the service).  
<https://www.enhertscg.nhs.uk/community-pharmacy>

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