

Medicines at home

Safe storage, and disposal when no longer needed

When somebody has died, what should happen to their medication?

The medication technically belongs to the person who has died. However, the medication is not required to be kept, except when the death is referred to the Coroner. The family, or those close to the person who has died, should return all medications to a community pharmacy for safe disposal when they feel ready to do so. Meanwhile the medications should be stored in a safe place, away from the reach of children, pets and vulnerable adults.

What if the person's death is referred to the Coroner?

In this circumstance, all medication, including controlled medications such as morphine, should be kept in the home of the person who has died until the Coroner gives permission for removal. The Coroner's Officer will let the family know when the medication can be removed for safe disposal (by taking it to a pharmacy).

Permission for removal is usually granted within seven days. During this time you are advised to store the medications in a safe place, away from the reach of children, pets and vulnerable adults.

What happens to the medication if the person who has died was in a Nursing Home?

Staff at the Nursing Home will arrange for the disposal of the medication.

Coping with medication when poorly

People who are poorly may be subject to frequent adjustments to medication, and can struggle to manage their medicines and medication regimes. Family and friends who are helping can also find this hard.

Please let your GP, district, community or hospice nurse know if you are struggling. They are all experienced in helping people who are finding their medicines difficult to take or to manage.

Medication no longer needed

Cupboards can soon fill up and it can be difficult to know what to do with medication when it is no longer being taken. It can be hard to identify what might still be useful and what will never be needed again.

Please contact your GP, district, community or hospice nurse if you are not sure what you should keep and what should be disposed of.

Can the medication be disposed with general waste?

No. All medication needs to be disposed of safely. Incorrect disposal may put others at risk. Medications that enter the sewage system via sinks, toilets and drains can affect the water supply, causing harm. The only safe way to dispose of medication is to take them to a pharmacist who will dispose of them safely.

Can the unwanted medication be taken to any pharmacy?

Yes. All community pharmacies are licensed to safely dispose of medication. It doesn't matter if it is not the pharmacy that originally dispensed the medication.

Where should unwanted medication be stored until taken for disposal?

Keep all medication safely, ideally in a locked cabinet or drawer, out of reach of children, pets and vulnerable adults.

What do I do with Sharps Boxes no longer needed?

Ring your district nurse team who will arrange for your sharps boxes to be collected. If you do not have a district nurse you can arrange collection through the borough's waste disposal services.

Who to contact

Caring for a relative or loved one when they are seriously ill with an advanced progressive, life limiting illness can be challenging and demanding. Please do contact us for advice and support as needed.

Please ring the Hospice on **020 8099 7777** if you have any worries or further questions about disposal of medication.