

# Care About Medicine

**Providing information, support & guidance on managing medicines safely and effectively in a social care setting**

**Issue 15 – January 2026**

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## What is polypharmacy and how can care staff help to reduce polypharmacy?

Polypharmacy means a person is taking several different medicines at the same time, which is common for people with long-term or complex health conditions. Medicines can be essential, but taking many at once increases the risk of avoidable adverse drug reactions and medicines no longer matching a person's current needs. That's why recognising polypharmacy is so important and why deprescribing is just as important as prescribing.

Deprescribing simply means safely reducing or stopping medicines that are no longer helpful, and it can only happen when concerns are raised and reviewed.

Carers play a key role by keeping accurate medication records, noticing changes such as drowsiness, falls, or difficulty managing tablets, and sharing these observations with healthcare professionals. Encouraging the person or their family to request a structured medication review with their pharmacist at the GP practice helps to ensure every medicine is still needed, safe, and effective.

By supporting open conversations about both prescribing and deprescribing, carers help protect people's wellbeing and reduce the risks linked to polypharmacy.

## Glyceryl Trinitrate (GTN) Medicines

Glyceryl Trinitrate (GTN) is used on a when required basis to treat chest pain caused by angina. These medicines are often used infrequently so there is a risk that these medicines may go out of date unknowingly. It is important to regularly check the expiry date on the container and replace when required as follows:

GTN spray – can be used up to the manufacturers' expiry date on the container  
GTN tablets – usually expire 8 weeks after opening. Ensure a date opened is written on the label/MAR chart.



## Decaffeinated Drinks

There are many health benefits from switching to decaffeinated drinks. These include

- Improves continence and reduction in urinary urgency
- Reduces falls
- Reduces tachycardia and palpitation
- Reduces headaches and dehydration



The adult continence team at University Hospitals of Leicester have done much work in this area promoting the health benefits in switching to decaffeinated drinks and this is supported locally by Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) to enhance the health and wellbeing of individuals.

For more information plus free resources visit:

<https://www.ucc-today.com/journals/issue/launch-edition/article/taste-difference-challenge-switching-decaffeinated-tea-and-coffee-healthy-bladder>

<https://stowhealthcare.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Taste-the-Difference-Webinar-Slides-18.04.2023.pdf>

The ICB is also hosting a free webinar which is taking place on Thursday 29 Jan 2026 14:00 - 14:45  
Register for the event here: [Decaffeinated by Default: Care Provider Webinar](#)

## RightBreathe Website – Useful Resource

There are over 120 inhaler device & drug combinations licensed for the treatment of respiratory disease in the UK, and it can be a challenge to understand how each one works. The technique needed varies between different types of device and there is firm evidence that patients who don't user their inhaler correctly don't achieve the maximum possible benefit from their treatment. Right Breathe website



# Right Breathe

<https://www.rightbreathe.com/> provides links to a comprehensive range of videos that can be shown to service users or can help staff understand the inhaler techniques they should observe when service users are using their inhaler devices.

## Topical Cream Recording

Topical creams are applied directly to the surface of the body. They work exactly where you put them, treating only that specific spot without affecting the rest of your body. This makes them effective for treating conditions like:

Skin infections      Eczema      Psoriasis  
Fungal infections      Pain

Prescriber directions on the label often say 'to be applied as directed' or 'to be applied when required as directed'. It is important that in these cases further clarification is sought from the prescriber of how they wish the medication to be applied.

It is best practice to have a body map chart to show where each cream should be applied. If this isn't possible due to eMAR software capabilities it is important that staff have clear instructions available to them to show where to apply, how much to apply e.g. thinly or liberally, when to apply and for how long. This should be recorded on a paper body map chart or as a task on the eMAR system.

It is also best practice to write dates of opening on creams and follow any manufacturers guidance on short shelf lives once opened. More information on expiry dates for creams can be found in appendix 6 of our [Medication Guidance for Home Based Care & Support Providers](#)

Appendix 4			
<b>Topical Medicines Application Record</b>			
Name of service user	Date of Birth	GP Name	Allergies
Name of Topical Preparation	Completed by		Checked by
Site of Application mark on body map			
Frequency of Application e.g. daily or after washing			
Month	Start Date	End Date	
<b>Body Map</b>			
Front & Left Side	Back & Right Side	Face	
<b>Foot</b>			
Date			
Time/age			
Date			
Time/age			
Date			
Time/age			
Storage e.g. Fridge		Date opened	Expiry date after opening

Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained in this newsletter is accurate at the time of publication.

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