

Care About Medicine

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

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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 These medicines are often used infrequently so there is a risk that these medicines may go out of date unknowingly.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



