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## Good Practice Guidance for Refrigerated Medicines in Care Homes

For all staff responsible for storing medicines in care homes

### Aim:

To outline the controls that should be in place to ensure safe storage of medicines that require refrigeration. Care Homes should include in their own medication policy how and where items that require refrigeration will be stored.

### The 'four Rs' of monitoring refrigerator temperatures:

<b>Read:</b>	Read temperatures at least daily
<b>Record:</b>	Record temperatures on a standard form, including signing
<b>Reset:</b>	Reset after each temperature reading
<b>React:</b>	React by taking action if temperature is outside +2°C to +8°C and document this action

### Fridge Requirements:

- Medication that needs to be refrigerated should be stored in a separate, secure, fridge that is **only** used for medicines (do not keep any food or pathology samples in medicines fridge)
- The fridge should either be locked or kept in a locked medicines room. Staff should be aware of key storage and access
- When medicines requiring refrigeration are received within the home they should be immediately identified and placed in the medicine's fridge
- Check that the fridge wall socket (where it is plugged in) is clearly labelled to leave on so that it does not get inadvertently switched off at the wall. (Some pharmaceutical fridges are directly wired so that this cannot occur)
- All fridges where medicines are stored should be serviced at least yearly
- An annual service and calibration programme is recommended to be undertaken by a specialist, and periodic portable appliance testing should be performed in line with organisational policy".<sup>1</sup> Consider activating the fridge warranty as this may also be helpful.
- Store medicines in an orderly fashion on shelves, not on the floor of the unit, or in the door. Avoid overfilling and keep a space between boxes and vials for proper circulation. Do not keep large amounts of medicines in the fridge as this can lead to inadequate air flow and potential freezing. Medicines should not touch the cooling plate in the back of the fridge
- Specialised refrigerators are available for the storage of pharmaceutical products and must be used for vaccines and diluents. Vaccines should **NOT** be stored in domestic refrigerators. For further information on vaccine storage please refer to The Green Book<sup>2</sup>
- Ensure fridge medications are regularly date checked and the stock rotated
- All fridges should be cleaned as part of the general cleaning rota and dated records kept. Domestic fridges (that are not self-defrosting) should be defrosted regularly and dated records kept. The home policy should state where the fridge contents should be refrigerated whilst cleaning takes place
- All medicines should be stored to the requirement in section 6.4 of the product's Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) [www.medicines.org.uk](http://www.medicines.org.uk)
- If medicines have been exposed to out-of-range temperatures, the following tool can be used to seek further advice on whether that medication can still be used:

[Refrigerated medicines stability tool – SPS - Specialist Pharmacy Service – The first stop for professional medicines advice](#)

### Thermometer Requirements:

- The medicines fridge must be monitored using a thermometer which measures both the minimum & maximum temperature. The thermometer, or its temperature monitoring probes should be sited in a central location within the fridge, preferably between the products - they should not be placed in the door

### Daily temperature recording:

- The fridge temperature should be checked and recorded daily. It is recommended that the minimum and maximum temperatures and the current temperature are all recorded. (See appendix 1 for sample recording chart)
- The fridge temperature must be kept between the **range of +2°C and +8°C**. If the fridge temperature is outside of this range action should be taken immediately - see below for required actions
- Ensure staff taking the thermometer readings understands how to read and reset the thermometer and why this is necessary

### What to do when the fridge temperature is out of range of +2°C and +8°C

- Inform the care home manager immediately
- Quarantine (separate and put in a safe place) the affected fridge stock by bagging and labelling 'Not for Use' and keep within a designated fridge while advice is sought
- Attach a notice to the fridge clearly stating do not use
- Estimate how many hours the fridge has been out of range (you should have the reading from the previous day's check)
- Contact your local pharmacy or the individual product manufacturer for advice
- Ensure that the stock which you are advised is no longer usable is disposed of promptly in line with local protocols
- Contact the GP to explain what has happened and request replacement medicines, if required
- If necessary, call out an engineer to repair the fridge
- Remember to record the action taken on the fridge temperature record sheet
- Ensure that it is clear where medicines should be stored (in an emergency) if the fridge malfunctions

**References and other useful Guidance:**

1. [Using a refrigerator or freezer to store medicines – SPS - Specialist Pharmacy Service – The first stop for professional medicines advice](#). Published 10 November 2022.
2. The Green Book 2013 – Accessed July 2017  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book#the-green-book>
3. NICE guidance: Managing medicines in care homes 2014  
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/sc1/resources/managing-medicines-in-care-homes-pdf-61677133765>
4. Specialist Pharmacy Service – Accessed May 2024  
<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/home/guidance/temperature-management-for-medicines-storage/>

