

Let's see if we can help

Managing Medicines: A Visual Impairment Resource




Introduction

This resource has been developed for Pharmacists and other health care staff as a 'hints and tips' guide to making it easier for people with visual impairments to manage their medicines. The best way for health care staff to help patients get the most from their medicines is to simply ask how they are managing with their medicines and try to find a mutually appropriate solution for each patient.

The guidance, although focussing on visual impairment, may have wider application in relation to:

- people with learning disabilities,
- people who don't have English as their first language,
- people who have literacy and / or numeracy problems.

The guidance was devised with help from patients and carers, voluntary organisations, Pharmacists, Optometrists and other healthcare professionals.



How to use this guide

This guide is provided for pharmacists, their staff and others who are in contact with people for whom a visual impairment results in difficulties in taking medicines.

It is arranged in sections – you don't need to read them all though it might be useful to do so. For speed, the sections are colour-coded:

Helping people take their medicines

Hints and tips that you can offer to patients

Labelling and identification of medicines

Hints and tips for the way you supply medicines

Further information and useful links

Acknowledgements

A resource pack is provided that includes examples of the aids that are described.

Information about where these can be obtained is included in the **“Further information and useful links”** section of this guide.

We will be evaluating the guide and resource pack, and as part of that evaluation we have included a data capture sheet. It would be very helpful to us if you could please complete this each time you use the guide.

Helping people take their medicines

The best way for health care staff to help patients get the most from their medicines is to simply ask how they are managing with their medicines and try to find a mutually appropriate solution for each patient.

- Ensure the patient understands how to take their medicines.
- Ensure patients know how to use their inhalers / eye drops etc.

TIPS FOR PATIENTS

Things that you can suggest to patients include:

- Use tactile markers - rubber bands, coloured dots, staples, bumpons (raised coloured dots that can be stuck onto a person's medicine; see resource pack and page 12); available from West Dunbartonshire CHCP Prescribing Support Team (01389 812319) to distinguish medicines e.g.
 - o Different number of markers to identify each medicine;
 - o Different number of markers to identify how many tablets to take;
 - o Different position of markers to identify when to take (e.g. at top of bottle = morning etc);
 - o Different types of markers to maximise the number of medicines that can be differentiated.
- Penfriend and Audio Labeller: works with labels that are uniquely numbered so that the Penfriend can recognise each individual recording and read it back to you (£12 for labels, £70 for pen; available rnib.org/uk or phone 0303 123 9999; see page 12).
- Talking Labels: provide audible guidance on identifying and taking medications. The label attaches to a standard medication pack. A message can be recorded and stored and can be played back at any time by pressing the button (cost £6.94 rnib.org/uk or phone 0303 123 9999; see page 12).

- Use a suitable magnifying glass or magnifying glasses (advice available from Optometrists or the Low Vision Aid service).
- Open bottles or pop tablets over a large tray with a solid rim to catch any that may fall.
- Use reminder functions on mobile phones/talking clock/watch etc to prompt when to take medicines.
- Take medicines at the same time every day.
- Keep medicines in the same place - and it may be helpful to put morning medicines on, for example, the top shelf of the bathroom cabinet and evening medicines on a lower shelf.
- Link taking medicines to daily routines, e.g. place meds next to cereal box.
- Stick large print reminders/images/photographs at key places, e.g. front of the fridge, by the TV, next to the kettle, on the back of the toilet door etc, to act as visual reminders to take medication.
- Try a dosette box - there are different styles available.
- Use any aids available to assist with delivery of eye drops etc (see page 11).

Labelling and identification of medicines TIPS FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

Ask the person what will work best for them when you are labelling their medicines.
Ask the person how they would like to be given information (e.g. verbally or written).
Always ensure that both the healthcare provider and the patient have the same understanding of any system used.

General Guidance

Additional Written Information:

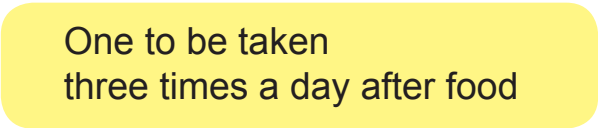
- Use 'plain English'.
- Avoid abbreviations.
- If information has to be written then write legibly.
- Be able to offer written information in alternative formats.
- **Don't** stick dispensing labels over Braille information on medicines.
- Record in the patient's notes any information you receive about the patient's visual impairment.
- Ask, and provide the opportunity for people to tell you, if anything has changed each time they return for repeat prescriptions.

Labelling and identification of medicines TIPS FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

Labelling of Medicines

- Print information using:
 - o a sans serif typeface e.g. Arial or Tahoma.
 - o a minimum font size of 12 or 14 point (consider colour and contrast of paper and font; refer to RNIB guidance – see the Useful Links section).
 - o avoid using blocks of capitals.
 - o avoid underlining.
 - o Ask the person what size font and colour of paper etc is best for them. (RNIB provides general advice about this).
 - o Use large print labels when possible (see below).
 - o If printing on packaging shows through the patient label, put a plain label on first.

Example of best practice - Arial font 14 point on cream/pale yellow background shown below:



One to be taken
three times a day after food

There are different pharmacy systems available – the following is a guide for each pharmacy system on how to provide large print labels.

Proscript

- This can be done via the reprint (F6) function. When a dispensed item is highlighted press, or click on, the F4 function button. This reprints the label in a much larger font.

Nexphase

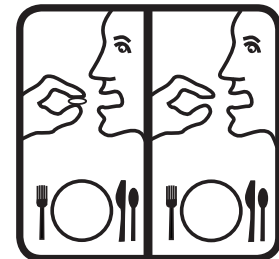
- From the patients PMR: Select “patient” tab along top of screen, then “patient details”, then “services”. Select box “Visually Impaired Labelling”, then “save” details.

Pharmacy Manager

- Bring up patient on dispensary screen, Click into the patient details, click onto ‘Other’ tab at the top of the screen, tick “Large labels required”, click “Apply”.

Labelling and identification of medicines TIPS FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

- Consider using **Translabel**. This is a system which provides an instant translation of basic medicine dosage into any of 14 commonly spoken languages, as well as into large print to assist patients with visual impairment. Translabel is free of charge, to anyone who would like to use it.
<http://www.translabel.co.uk/faq.htm> (Some IT systems may not allow access to this website).
- Offer to provide assistance with Talking Labels. These provide audible guidance on identifying and taking medications. The label attaches to a standard medication pack. A message can be recorded and stored which can be played back at any time by pressing the button (cost £6.94, rrib.org/uk or phone 0303 123 9999 see page 12).
- **USP Pictograms** are standardized graphic images that help convey medication instructions, precautions and / or warnings to patients and consumers. They can be particularly helpful in giving important information to patients with a lower-level reading ability or for whom English is a second language. Here is a sample of the pictograms. Pre-printed labels are available from West Dunbartonshire CHCP Prescribing Support Team (01389 812 319; see resource pack).



Take 2 times a day with meals

Identification of Medicines

- Use tactile markers - rubber bands, coloured dots, staples, bumpons (raised coloured dots that can be stuck onto a person's medicine - see resource pack and page 12; available from West Dunbartonshire CHCP Prescribing Support Team (01389 812319) to distinguish medicines e.g.
 - o Different number of markers to identify each medicine;
 - o Different number of markers to identify how many tablets to take;
 - o Different position of markers to identify when to take (e.g. at top of bottle=morning etc);
 - o Different types of markers to maximise the number of medicines that can be differentiated.
- Put tablets in marked containers, chosen by the patient, so that they can identify the different medications by the size, shape, colour or texture of the container.
- Large print drug patient information leaflets are available at <http://xpil.medicines.org.uk/>
- Contact the manufacturer to obtain a Braille/audio format for patient information leaflet if required.

Further Information and useful links

Aids to taking medication safely and easily include:

1.



1. Eye drop dispensers which are available to buy (supplied by Owen Mumford, phone 01993 812 021); see resource pack; to aid with administration of eye drops.

2.



2. Opticare Arthro 10 eye drop dispenser (£6.64 rnib.org/uk or phone 0303 123 9999).

3.



3. Pill press / pill poppet enables medicines to be pushed out of blister packs more easily; (£1.99/£5.99 rnib.org/uk or phone 0303 123 9999).

4.



4. Bottle opener (£2.95 rnib.org/uk or phone 0303 123 9999).

5. Winged caps: non-child-resistant tops with a wing attachment available from Chasco, Cambuslang, phone 0141 641 3073



6. Talking Labels to provide audible guidance on identifying and taking medications. The label attaches to a standard medication pack. A message can be recorded and stored which can be played back at any time by pressing the button (cost £6.94 rnib.org/uk or phone 0303 123 9999).



7. Inhaler aids to help patients grip, actuate or twist their inhaler device (available GSK on 020 8047 2500).
8. Penfriend and Audio Labeller: works with labels that are uniquely numbered so that the Penfriend can recognise each individual recording and read it back to you (£12 for labels, £70 for pen; available rnib.org/uk or phone 0303 123 9999 see page 10).



9. Bumpons: adhesive raised tactile markers (available from West Dunbartonshire CHCP Prescribing Support Team (01389 812319)).

Best Practice Guidance:

- You should consider ways to display / give the above information to let patients and their relatives know that the above options are available. Not all patients will ask.
- As part of routinely asking patients about visual impairment, and / or how people are managing with their medicines, build in information for all patients about the various aids and devices that may make things easier.

Visual Impairment Resource

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CONTACTS: Please see resource pack for list of useful contacts