

This guide provides nurses with information to actively support a person and/or their carer to be independent with all, or part, of their medicines management.

This guide should be used in conjunction with the [Supporting Independence in Care: A guide for Clinicians](#) and your relevant organisation's policies and procedures.

Other translated resources are available via the [Bolton Clarke Website](#):

- [Talking Books on Diabetes](#)
- [Information on Medicines in English a talking book](#)
- [Medicines Reminder Cards](#)

The steps below promote independence as part of a wellness and reablement approach. Actively engaging and supporting people to do all or part of their medicines management should be considered when assessing and planning care. This includes people with dementia. Every person should have their confidence, motivation, strengths and abilities assessed and preferences considered to maximise their independence. Engaging a person in their care has positive benefits for their wellbeing and confidence.

How we encourage participation with the person and/or their carer

Assessment findings and clinical judgement determine whether the requirements of the care align with the person's wishes and abilities. There are 5 steps to consider:

Step 1: Know the person

A staged assessment allows the nurse time to build rapport with the person and/or their carer.

Consider the following questions:

- What are the person's beliefs, values and attitudes towards medicines and being independent?
- What are the person's goals for medicine management?
- What are the person's strengths and abilities?
- Are there any known allergies or adverse reactions?
- Is the person's family or carer willing to assist?
- Are there any other barriers to participation or independence e.g. financial hardship?

Step 2: Assess the person's ability

Consider or identify any factors that may influence the person's ability to participate or be independent with their care:

- Has the person got the cognitive or physical (vision, hearing) capacity to participate in their care?
- What is the person's level of health literacy, learning style or preferred language?

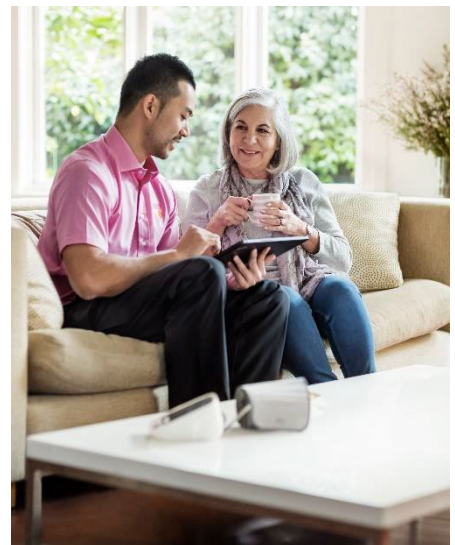
- Does the person have the required manual dexterity for medicine administration, including device use where needed?
- Is there an opportunity to simplify a complex medicine management regimen? Consider referral for Home Medicines Review (HMR)
- Does the person take moderate or high-risk classified medicines that require monitoring, strict timing or adjustment of dosage?
- Does the person have a swallowing issue? Can their medicine be taken in a liquid or crushed form?
- Does the person have vision issues that may impact reading instructions for taking medicines or dialling up insulin?
- Can the person access their doctor for prescriptions or pharmacist for medicines?
- Is there a safe place for medicines management (e.g. clutter free, safe for storage of medicines)?

Note: Depending upon the care needs and preferences of the client, the assessment will determine the type of support required. Only a Registered Nurse or Enrolled Nurse is permitted to administer medicines. If the client requires prompting or assistance with medications, this must be delegated by a Registered Nurse appropriately trained personal care worker in line with relevant policies and procedures.

Step 3: What does participation look like?

People have the right to be engaged in decisions about their care, to remain in control and have choice about participation, even in small ways. As their confidence and competence grows or care requirements change, the level of support will also change. Consider these options:

- Providing 'stand by' support and encouragement to build confidence
- Support via telehealth
- Sharing the care e.g. a carer/family provide support on a weekend
- Encourage the person to participate in their care e.g. nurse dials up the insulin and the person injects it
- Ensure that enough time is planned to allow the person to make decisions and learn new skills in a timely manner, so they are not feeling rushed or overwhelmed



Step 4: Supporting independence or participation

Consider the following points and possible solutions when setting up care.

- Assess knowledge or provide education on:
 - Understanding the medicine purpose, side effects, precautions and when and how to take e.g. before or after meals, not lie down after taking medicine, managing sick days/troubleshooting
 - Use of devices to support medicine administration e.g. Dose administration aids (DAAs), nebulizers, blood glucose monitor
 - Any safety issues and how to problem solve if they occur e.g. what to do if medicines are spilled, safe disposal of expired/unused medicines
 - [Consumer Medicine Information](#) (CMI) leaflet and what to do if they miss a dose or make an error
 - Understanding of emergency and PRN (as needed) use of medicines
 - Delivery (if applicable) and safe storage of medicines
 - Reducing unhelpful stimulation, clutter, distractions when preparing and taking medicine e.g. turn off TV or move to a quiet room.
- Access to inclusive information on medicines in the format they want e.g. in plain language or translated
- Access any written information, equipment or assistive technology to support the care. Consider referral to Occupational Therapist for strategies or aids tailored to the person e.g. sequence and planning, manual dexterity.
- Communicate the plan for care and participation with the care team e.g. GP, pharmacist.

Approaches to support independence

There are many approaches that can be used to support a person's participation or independence with their medicines. The following should be considered when planning care.

Memory support aids

People with a cognitive impairment or dementia have the potential to participate in their care. The following tools may support them with taking their medicines:

- A clock and/or calendar to support orientation to time and date
- Reminder devices e.g. Medicine Reminder Cards, Tab Timer
- Mobile phone apps e.g. Pillboxie

Hints: Enabling environments assist people and/or their carers to be independent or participate with medicines management. Consider creating:

- ✓ a familiar space in their home for the person to recognise where they store and take their medicine
- ✓ a familiar routine for the person to follow e.g. place the pharmacy-filled medication pack next to calendar clock or diary, to remind the client of the day and the medicines due at that time.
- ✓ an instruction sheet to prompt the person to mark off in a diary when they have taken their medicines

Orientation and awareness to the time of day, date, year and season can be aided by the following:

- ✓ Changes in daylight and the season
- ✓ Sensory experiences such as the smell of lunch cooking
- ✓ Orientation clocks and calendars
- ✓ Artificial lighting- ensuring brightness of lights are indicative of the time of day
- ✓ Newspapers or memory boards indicating day and date

Assistive Technology

The following examples of assistive technology may support the person to take their own medicines.

- Dose administration aid e.g. [Webster-pak®](#), pharmacy-filled medicine sachets
- Vibrating dose administration aids
- Vibrating reminder watches
- [Pil-bob®](#)
- Large print labels or instructions
- Magnifier for vision issues
- Autodrop® device for eye drop administration

Hints:

- ✓ Consider sachets if the person has dexterity issues. If medicine requires crushing it can be crushed in the sachet
- ✓ Gap funding for assistive devices is available through the [Australian Government initiative Goods Equipment and Assistive Technology \(Australian GEAT2G0\)](#). The person must be registered with CHSP. The person requires a GEAT code on their MAC portal profile. Generally, it will be an Occupational Therapist who will order the equipment but there is provision for Registered nurses and Physiotherapists to apply

Medication Simplification

Simplification of medicine management should be considered for anyone with a complex regimen. Complex medication needs can lead to missed doses or errors, and it is harder to achieve independence. The following can make it challenging for the person to manage – multiple doses, polypharmacy and/or complex instructions.

Consider working with the person and their care team to review their medication regimen.

- Medications Review (HMR) undertaken by a pharmacist is a good place to start with the simplification of a medication regimen.

Hints:

- ✓ Check if medicines can be taken as 1 tablet daily instead of ½ tablet twice daily this reduces complexity.
- ✓ If swallowing is a problem for the person consider different medicine forms e.g. as a suspension or liquid if available.

Step 5: Reviewing strategies

Review the strategies to determine how the person and/or their carer is managing and adapt these as required. The frequency of review will depend upon the person and/or their carer, the type of strategy, complexity, confidence and ability.