



the use of dose administration aids by nurses¹

Where the term 'nurse' is used it includes all licensed classifications including, but not limited to: registered nurse, midwife, enrolled nurse, nurse practitioner.

Dose administration aids are primarily designed and intended for the person's own use to facilitate accurate self administration of their medicines.

Dose administration aids do not provide information to the person administering the medicines as to why a particular medicine is being administered; when not to administer the medicine; or in relation to appropriateness, medicine intolerance, medicine interactions and adverse reactions.

The ANF recommends the adoption of the following guidelines:

1. Dose administration aids may be used by people to assist with self medication.
2. Patients/residents/clients using dose administration aids must be able to determine the name of the medicine and its purpose, and the dose and frequency of the medicine so they can decide whether or not to take the medicine.
3. Persons in receipt of health and/or aged care services, whether as an inpatient in a hospital, a resident in an aged care facility/disability residence or living in the community, assessment as to whether they are likely to benefit from the use of a dose administration aid or whether they are suitable to self administer medicines must only be undertaken by their medical practitioner, a registered nurse² or a nurse practitioner and within written policies and protocols developed by a facility's medication advisory committee (however titled). These policies and procedures outline the criteria for assessing the person's suitability to self administer medicine and any restrictions to the medicines which may be self administered. Such policies should also require a checking process following delivery to the facility against the medication orders of the patient/resident/client.
4. Confirmation that a person may self administer their medicines should be documented in the person's health record and/or their medicine chart.
5. When a person is assessed as being unable to self administer their medicines a registered nurse, midwife or authorised enrolled nurse³ is the appropriate person to administer medicines.⁴
6. Persons other than registered nurses, midwives and authorised enrolled nurses may provide physical assistance to a person who is self administering their medicine, at the person's request provided the person has been recently assessed as being able to self administer.
7. All dose administration aids should be checked by a registered nurse or midwife to ensure that information on individual medicines is readily identifiable. The information must be of a size and layout that permits people with poor eyesight to read. Packaging should be arranged in a way that ensures that medicines cannot become mixed or spilled. Packaging should also allow for people with poor hand dexterity to open them while at the same time deterring access by children. The packaging must preserve the quality of the medicine and be tamper proof.

8. If the dose administration aid being used is a blister pack then it should be prepared and adequately labelled by a pharmacist and include the person's name, the name and strength of the medicine, dosage, frequency, and route of administration.
9. If the prescriber alters the medicine instruction and the dose administration being used is a blister pack prepared by a pharmacist, the dose administration aid must be returned to the pharmacist for repackaging.
10. Secure storage of all medicines, including those for self administration, must be provided by the householder or the service provider. Storage should comply with state or territory legislation and with the recommendations made by the dispensing pharmacist.
11. All medicine administration by a registered nurse or authorised enrolled nurse must be from the original dispensed container. Registered nurse or authorised enrolled nurses should only administer medicines from blister packs which contain more than one medicine in the blister where each individual medicine can be clearly identified.
12. A registered nurse, in some states and territories, may package a person's own medicines into a compartmentalised box for them to self administer. The box must be packed from the person's own dispensed medicines. It must be labelled with the full name of the person; the name and strength of the medicine; the dose, route and frequency of the medicine; the date of commencement; and the duration where applicable. It is recommended that no more than a seven day supply be provided in this way at any time. A registered nurse must not package a person's own medicines into a compartmentalised box for another paid worker to administer.
13. A registered nurse may only package a person's own medicines into a dose administration aid eg a compartmentalised box if the person fully understands the medicines they are taking; the reasons they are taking them; when not to take them; and their medication regimen. Mechanisms must be in place for the compartmentalised box to be refilled should spillage occur.
14. The filling of dose administration aids by registered nurses must be in accordance with legislative requirements. It is the responsibility of the registered nurse to be familiar with the legislation that is relevant to the state or territory in which they are working.

endorsed may 2000

reviewed and re-endorsed may 2005

reviewed and re-endorsed november 2008

references

1. Dose administration aids or medicine administration aids may consist of blister-type packaging or compartmentalised boxes.
2. Registered nurse division 1 in Victoria.
3. Registered nurse division 2 in Victoria. Authorised enrolled nurses are those permitted by the state or territory's nurse regulatory authority to administer medicines.
4. See recommendation 4 in the Australian Pharmaceutical Advisory Council's Guidelines for medication management in residential aged care facilities (3rd ed), available from:
www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nst/content/nmp-pdf-resguide-cnt.htm.