Guiding principles for medication management in residential aged care facilities

A guide for residents and carers

Most people who live in aged care homes take medicines. Many take a number of different medicines for different health conditions. The quality use of medicines reduces the risk of unwanted effects or errors and can improve your health and quality of life.

The Guiding Principles for Medication Management in Residential Aged Care Facilities promote the safe, quality use of medicines and medication management in your aged care home. The Guiding Principles are published by the Australian Government and are based on evidence and advice from experts, providers and users of medicines in health and aged care services.

The Guiding Principles apply to everyone involved in your care: you, your family, carers and representatives, your nursing staff, care staff and management, and your visiting health care providers such as your general practitioner and pharmacist.

The questions and answers overleaf address some key topics in the Guiding Principles to assist you (and/or your family, carers or representatives) to play an active part in the quality use and safe management of your medicines.

Quality Use of Medicines

• carefully consider treatment options, which may or may not include medicines;
• select the right medicines; and
• use medicines safely to get the best possible results.

Medication Management

• how medicines are selected, ordered and supplied;
• how people take medicines or are assisted to take them;
• how medicines use is recorded and reviewed;
• how medicines are stored and disposed of safely; and
• how medicines use is supported, monitored and evaluated.

What do I need to tell those caring for me about my medicines?

It is important to tell your care staff, doctor and pharmacist about all the medicines you are taking, including any non-prescription, complementary or alternative medicines (including vitamin supplements and herbal medicines) selected by you or your carer. The Guiding Principles encourage good communication between you and your health professionals to assist the safe, quality use of your medicines and avoid medicine interactions and errors.

How can I find out more about the medicines I am taking?

The Guiding Principles recommend that current and accurate medicines information is available to you and everyone involved in your medication management. Your pharmacist or aged care home can help you keep a list of all the medicines you are taking, including what your medicine is for, how much to use and when to use it.

You can find tools to help you learn more about your medicines from the NPS: Better Choices, Better Health website at www.nps.org.au. You can also phone Medicines Line on 1300 633 424 (available Monday to Friday 9am–5pm) for advice on prescription, over-the-counter and complementary medicines.

Consumer Medicines Information (CMI) leaflets give you important facts about your prescription and pharmacist-only medicines, including what to do to before, during and after taking your medicine. CMI is available from your aged care home, health care provider or online at: www.nps.org.au/cmi or www.tga.gov.au/about/ebs-picmi.htm

Should my medicines be reviewed regularly?

The Guiding Principles recommend that your medicines are reviewed regularly to make sure all of your medicines are still needed and are being used safely and for best effect. This is particularly important if you were recently in hospital, or your medical condition/s or medicines have changed. Medication review also gives you the opportunity to ask any questions you have about your medicines, so any problems can be resolved or prevented.
Can I manage my own medicines in my aged care home?

The Guiding Principles recognise that for some people, managing their own medicines is important in helping them stay independent. The Guiding Principles recommend your aged care home supports you if you choose to manage all or some of your medicines and can do this safely. This includes providing you with advice on how to store, take and dispose of your medicines safely.

How is medication management in my aged care home supervised and reviewed?

Medicines and medication management are subject to national, state and territory laws, regulations and standards. The Guiding Principles recommend that all aged care homes have a Medication Advisory Committee (MAC) of health professionals, your aged care home management and a resident representative. The MAC helps your aged care home plan and review medication management and take action to improve safe and quality use of medicines where required.

What are my rights and responsibilities in medication management?

All people receiving or seeking health care in Australia have rights regarding their care, as outlined in the Australia Charter of Healthcare Rights.

The Guiding Principles recognise that people have both rights and responsibilities in residential care services. Your rights and responsibilities are described in the Charter of Residents’ Rights and Responsibilities.

What if I have concerns about my medicines or medication management?

Talk about your concerns with your nursing staff, doctor, pharmacist, aged care home management or your family carer. You may also wish to raise any matters regarding medication management in your aged care home for discussion by your MAC.

If you suspect a medicine is causing you a problem and you are worried about using it, talk to your health care professional or you can phone the Adverse Medicine Events line on 1300 134 237 (available Monday to Friday 9am–5pm).
Where can I get further information?

If you have any further questions you may wish to contact the Aged Care Information Line on 1800 500 853.

The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights

Everyone who is seeking or receiving care in the Australian health system has certain rights regarding the nature of that care. The Charter is available at: http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/our-work/national-perspectives/charter-of-healthcare-rights/

The Charter of Residents’ Rights and Responsibilities

This Charter sets out the rights and responsibilities of people receiving care in residential care services. The Charter is part of the User Rights Principles of the Aged Care Act 1997 and is available at: www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2012C00077

Aged Care Complaints Scheme

If you have concerns about the care you are receiving or you are unable to resolve a complaint with your aged care home, you or your family carer may wish to contact the Aged Care Complaints Scheme on 1800 550 552 or visit the website at: www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/ageing-complaints-index.htm