

Medication room and refrigerator temperature management guide for care homes

For local adaptation to fit within individual Care Home medication policies

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Document produced by: Care Homes Medicines Optimisation Team,
NHS Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group

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Development process

Name of those involved in guidance development

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Committee where guidance was discussed/approved/ratified

Committee/group	Date	Status
BLMK Primary Care Prescribing committee	21/4/2022	Approved

Responsibilities

All staff responsible for administering medication in care homes must read and understand this guidance on the importance of recording temperatures where medication is stored (room and refrigerator) and reporting any problems/issues.

Introduction

The BLMK Care Homes Medicines Optimisation team have produced this room and refrigerator temperature management guide to support care homes. This is to ensure all medication is stored appropriately and at the correct temperature.

Manufacturers of medicines usually provide information on storage requirements; this can be found on packaging and/or in patient information leaflets. For most medicines, storage requirements indicate to store below 25°C, unless it is a medicine that needs to be refrigerated, in which case storage requirements are between 2°C and 8°C.

[The Care Quality Commission \(CQC\) provides guidance for medicines requiring refrigerator storage.](#)

However, the guidance for temperature recording of other medication (not requiring refrigeration) is less clear. NICE guidelines on 'Managing medicines in care homes' state '*storage temperatures and monitoring (refrigerator 2-8°C, room **usually** no more than 25°C)*'. The Royal Pharmaceutical Council state to record the temperatures for patient safety and to comply with the correct storage of medication. We recommend, in line with NICE guidelines that room temperatures are kept at 25°C or below.

Temperatures for the medication room/storage area and the refrigerator should be recorded daily, preferably in the morning. However, we are aware that some care homes may record temperatures twice a day (e.g., during heatwave) which would be considered good practice. This is especially useful when trying to establish when the temperature has fallen out of range.

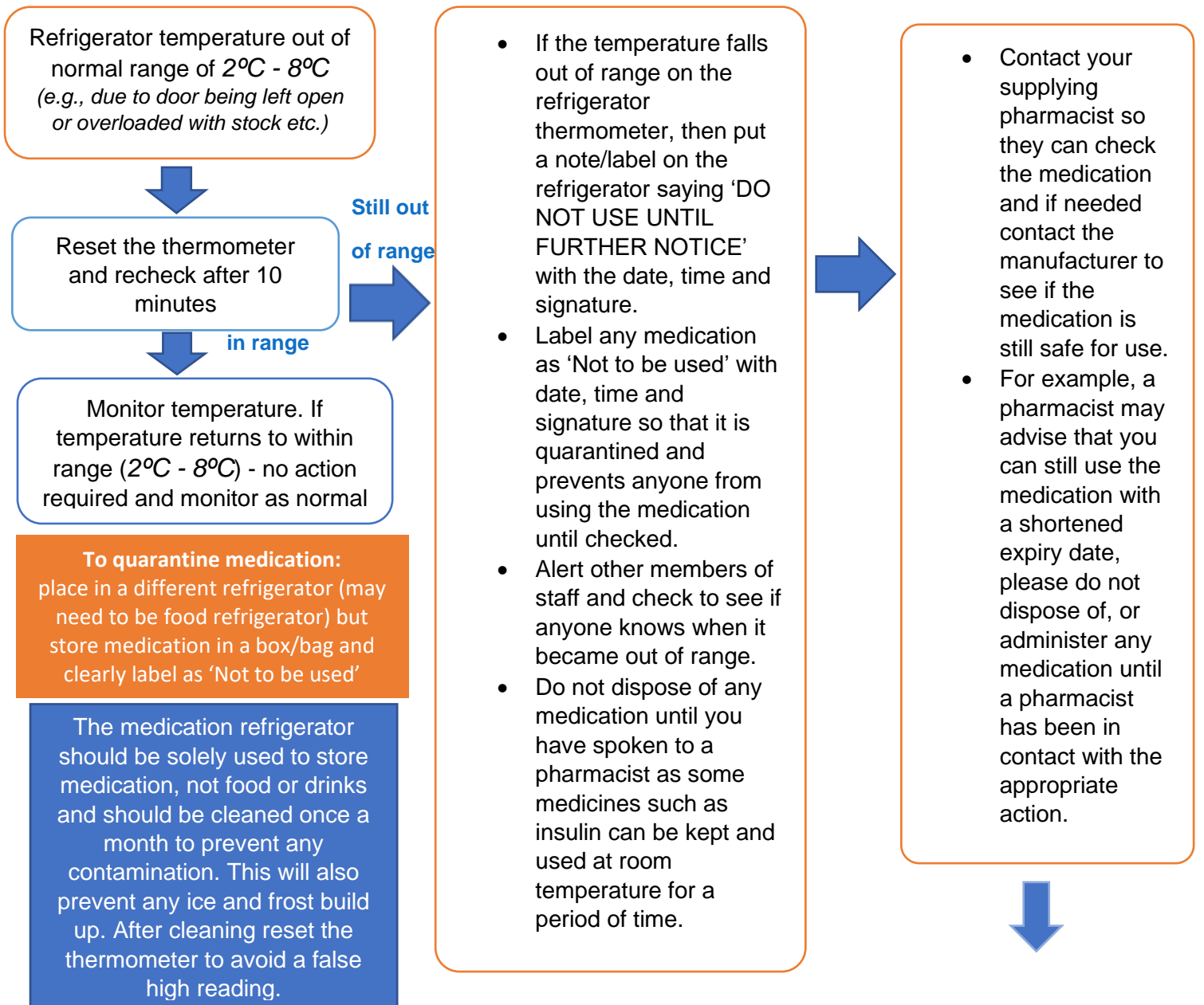
For residents who self-administer and keep their medication in their room, daily temperature recording of their room may not necessary. However, if there is likely to be a period of extreme heat (e.g., heatwave or heating is on maximum setting in room) then the temperature may need to be checked and a risk assessment may be required if the temperature is consistently above 25°C.

How to record temperatures

- Record the actual temperature reading (for room and refrigerator).
- Press the button for the minimum temperature and maximum temperature and record those in the appropriate column (refrigerator only).
- Reset the thermometer – this needs to be reset each time for an accurate reading (for room and refrigerator). **Please note:** this may not be possible for all room temperature thermometers.
- The minimum and maximum temperatures refer to the minimum and maximum temperatures that the refrigerator has been since the last time the thermometer is reset, therefore it is vital that the thermometer is reset each time a new reading is recorded.
- The minimum and maximum refrigerator temperature readings should not be the same every day if the thermometer is reset correctly.
- The temperature readings should be kept for 11 years as per CQC suggestion. This is in case the CQC require them as proof that they are being recorded correctly and are in range.

See Appendix 1 for an example of a blank temperature record sheet

What to do if the refrigerator temperature falls out of range



When alerting your supplying pharmacy that the temperature is out of range you need to include key information such as: the name of the care home, the last temperature readings (actual, maximum and minimum) including the date and time, the medicines involved including the strength and form (tablet, oral suspension, injection, etc) and how long the refrigerator has been turned off, malfunctioning or not recording correctly.

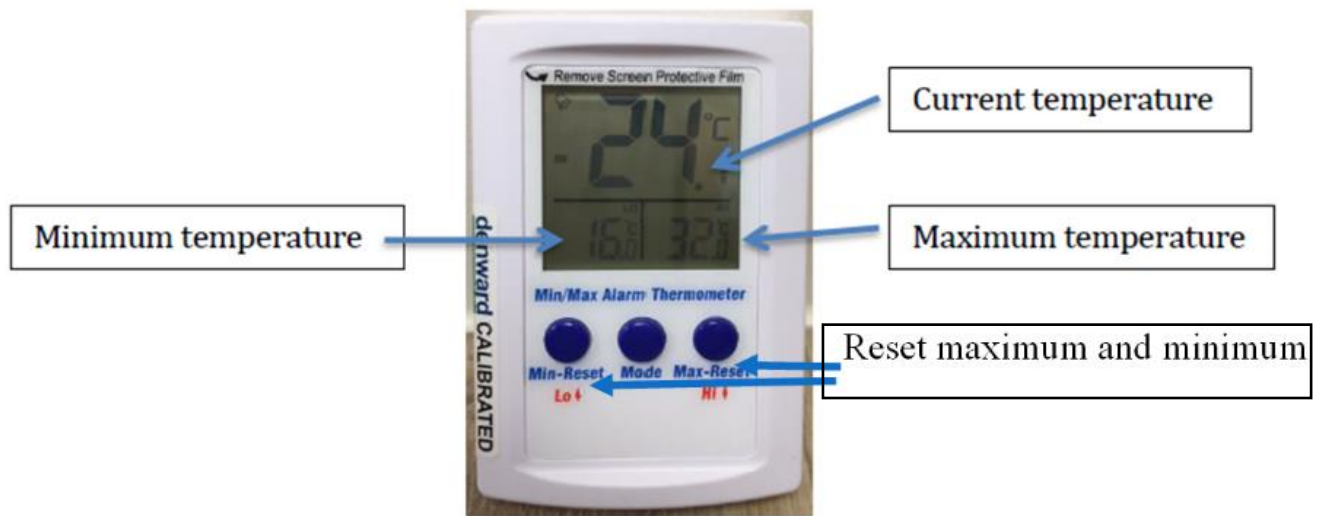
If the pharmacist informs you that the medication is not suitable for use, then the medication needs to be disposed of in line with your care home policy. New medication will need to be ordered from your GP surgery urgently, informing them of the reason for an earlier request.

Medication room/storage – action if temperature out of range

If room temperatures are consistently above 25°C in a medication room, consider the introduction of a cooling unit (e.g., air conditioner). If this is the case in a resident's room, carry out a risk assessment and consider installing a cooling unit or store medicines in a cooler place. If there are any concerns about the medicine's stability being affected, contact your supplying pharmacist for advice. Keep records of any temperature in case required by inspectors. This is to show that the problem has been checked, monitored, and addressed.

Thermometer example

BLMK CCG appreciates that all care homes use different thermometers, however, below is a simple example of how to read the thermometer correctly and reset.



1. Enter the date and time of temperature recording.
2. The main large display on the thermometer showing the current temperature needs to be recorded under the “Actual Temperature” column on the log sheet.
3. The minimum temperature should be recorded in the “minimum temperature” column in the log sheet.
4. The maximum temperature should be recorded in the “maximum temperature” column in the log sheet.
5. Reset the temperature reading by pressing the ‘min-reset’ and ‘max-reset’ button for 3 seconds until you hear a beep.

Reference list and further information

- NICE guidelines managing medicines in care homes March 2014 [online] [Managing medicines in care homes \(nice.org.uk\)](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/TA252)
- The Royal Pharmaceutical society storage of medicines [online] <https://www.rpharms.com/recognition/setting-professional-standards/safe-and-secure-handling-of-medicines/professional-guidance-on-the-safe-and-secure-handling-of-medicines>
- [The temperature requirements for medicines storage. Health Guidance. The Care Inspectorate. Publication date: March 2016](#)
- CQC temperature guidelines [The Care Quality Commission \(CQC\) provides guidance for medicines requiring fridge storage](#)
- NHSX records management code of practice: [Records Management Code of Practice 2021 - NHSX](#)