






(1 of 2)


Disposal of Unwanted Medicines During the COVID-19 Pandemic

-  During the COVID-19 pandemic, some community pharmacies may not be accepting medicines returns.
-  This is because pharmacies may have an increased workload with reduced staff numbers and also the risk of contamination of medicines being returned from settings that have had confirmed COVID-19 cases.
-  Care homes should update their risk assessments to reflect this current situation.

Storage

-  Unwanted medicines awaiting disposal need to be stored securely with access restricted to authorised staff only.
-  A manager/ senior person will assess the existing storage arrangements and make any necessary adjustments to ensure that there is enough space to hold unwanted medicines awaiting return to the pharmacy/ collection from waste contractor.

Records

-  Appropriate records must be maintained for unwanted medicines.

(2 of 2)

Disposal of Unwanted Medicines During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Medicines for Re-Use



A manager/senior person should consider if an unwanted medicine is suitable for re-use in accordance with the NHS England and NHS Improvement standard operating procedure (SOP) on running a medicines re-use scheme in care homes and hospice settings.



This SOP details which and when medicines can be considered for re-use, including the need for storage in accordance with good practice guidance.

When Returning Unwanted Medicines



If a local pharmacy is accepting unwanted medicines, to help reduce the need for pharmacy staff to handle the medicines, the following steps are advised:

- 1 *Wipe the outside of the bottle or packaging with a damp cloth using your usual detergent*
- 2 *Place in a plastic bag*
- 3 *Separate any medicines with needles or controlled drugs from other medicines*
- 4 *Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitiser after handling*