



Basic Medication Administration

Many of the people you support take at least one or more medications on a daily basis. Everyone you support will need to take medication(s) at some time or another as their medical status changes. Medication administration is a high risk activity. You will learn critical skills in this unit which are designed to increase safety and reduce the risk of error. This will help to maximize protection for the individuals you assist as well as your self. No one wants to be responsible for causing injury or harm to someone else. The health of many individuals in licensed settings depends on the skills of the DSP assisting them with taking medications.

As you will see administering medications is a very important responsibility and there are many risks. This is why it is so important to follow the Physicians orders exactly. Safety is key to preventing medication errors.

Your job doesn't end after you have passed the medication! You must also learn about each medication: why is the individual taking it, what are the side effects, how will you know if it is working, are there foods or drinks that should be avoided, other medications that should be avoided, will it prevent the individual from doing certain activities, etc. Your knowledge and understanding of medications will help you keep the individuals you support informed about their medications and to answer any questions they may have.

Effects of Medication

Medications are substances that are taken into (or applied to) the body for the purpose of prevention, treatment, relief of symptoms, or cure. The DSP may only assist individuals with administration of medications that have been ordered and prescribed by a person licensed to do so by the Department of Licensing and Regulation (i.e., Doctor, Dentist, or Nurse Practitioner.) This includes **both** prescription and over-the-counter medications. The doctor's signed, dated order or prescription provides instructions for preparation and administration of the medication.

Prescription medications are those that are always ordered by a doctor or other person with authority to write a prescription. **Over-the-counter (OTC)** medications are those that typically can be bought without a doctor's order and include vitamin supplements, herbal remedies, and commonly used medications such as Tylenol and Benadryl. In licensed residential settings even "over-the-counter" medications must have a signed, dated order or prescription from the Doctor.

PRN medications are taken "as needed" to treat a specific symptom. PRN medications include both prescription and over-the-counter medications. PRN medications must always be ordered by a doctor. The doctor's order should include the minimum and maximum number of doses, the number of days the medication may be used, under what conditions or the condition it is prescribed for and any other directions specific to the individual. The reason for each dose of PRN medication must be documented. Each dose of medication must be recorded on the individual's medication sheet, and the DSP should assure that a.m. or p.m. is noted too. To prevent errors always check for the last time a PRN medication was given before dispensing, and follow all individual medical protocols for that medication. When a PRN medication is administered the DSP must complete a follow up check in 30-45 minutes. This check involves

talking to, and observing the individual for the intended effect, and documenting that effectiveness.

* Please note that AFC administrative rules require Initiation of a review process to evaluate an individual's condition if the individual requires the repeated and prolonged use of a medication that is prescribed on an as needed basis. The review process shall include the individual's prescribing physician, the individual or his or her designated representative, and the responsible agency.

AFC administrative rules [400.14312(4)(c-d)] [400.15312(4)(c-d)] Resident Medications

Medications are powerful substances and can have a significant impact on an individual's overall state of health, behavior, and the ability to prevent, combat, or control disease. Medications affect each individual differently. Usually a medication is taken for a primary or intended effect or action: controlling seizures, lowering blood pressure, or relieving pain.

Many drugs have other known actions besides the primary or intended one. These actions are called secondary actions or **side effects**. Many of these effects are predictable; however, some are not. Side effects may be desirable or undesirable, harmless or dangerous. Sometimes they can even be deadly. Both prescription and OTC drugs have side effects. An example of a side effect is when the medication makes the individual feel nauseated, confused, dizzy, or anxious, or when it causes a rash or a change in a bodily function such as a change in appetite, sleep pattern, or elimination.

It is not uncommon for two or more medications to interact with one another, causing unwanted side effects. An example of this would be when iron or Penicillin is given with an antacid. The antacid prevents the iron or Penicillin from being absorbed in the stomach.

Common Medication Categories

Drugs are classified into categories or classes with other medications that affect the body in similar ways. Thousands of medications are on the market. Many drugs, because of their multiple uses, can be found in more than one category. For example, Benadryl® is an antihistamine, which relieves allergy symptoms. It's also a sedative to promote sleep. Some common categories of medications used by individuals with developmental disabilities or Mental Illness include:

- Anti-convulsants
- Antibiotics
- Pain medications
- Topical ointments or creams
- Psychotropic medications, which include anti-depressants and antipsychotics

Anti-Convulsants or Anti-Seizure Medications

Seizures can be treated by medications. Medications prescribed to control seizure activity in individuals with epilepsy are often referred to as anti-convulsants. The type of seizures an individual has determines which anticonvulsant the physician prescribes.