



Caring for Care Homes Plymouth



The newsletter for Care Home staff, General Practitioners and Community Pharmacists within NHS Plymouth

Issue 3

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Underweight? Poor appetite? Making the most of foods and sip feeds

If care homes are concerned that any of their service users have lost weight without trying, or have a poor appetite, it is very important to make the most of the foods they are eating. As a first step, care homes may want to try to fortify food to increase the nutritional value by adding small quantities of other everyday foods (e.g. double cream or custard to desserts). To help support care homes within the Plymouth area we have produced a Guidance Sheet '**Tips to help make the most of food**'. This contains further advice on how to fortify food.

If care homes still feel that the service user needs nutritional support they may need to contact their GP, who may consider prescribing Oral Nutritional Support sip feeds. When starting sip feeds the first prescription should be for various flavours to establish which ones the service user likes. This can help reduce waste if particular flavours are disliked. Once established it is usual for only two flavours to be prescribed. If more variation is required neutral flavoured sip feeds are available and additional flavourings can be added to provide more variety. To provide ideas on how to help service users enjoy and make the most of their supplements, we have produced a Guidance Sheet '**Making the most of sip feeds**'.

It is important for care homes to encourage the service user to continue to eat at all mealtimes. Sip feeds are intended to be used in addition rather than replace food, they should be offered between meals. Fortifying meals and snacks should also be offered. Care homes will need to keep a record of the service user's weight so that they can track progress and review the need to continue with sip feeds.

With this newsletter care homes also received a copy of these guidance sheets and a supporting leaflet for the service user called '**Making the most of your food**'.

Drugs and falls

There are numerous factors that contribute to the risk of falls. Many drugs increase the risk of falls in varied ways and taking four or more medicines is an independent risk factor. During a medication review the risks and benefits of drugs will be reviewed; however, it must be remembered that it may not be possible to stop any of the medicines.

We have produced a guidance sheet for care homes that gives a breakdown of the different types of drugs that may contribute to a fall. We hope that this will raise awareness of the types of drugs that can contribute to falls and this can be used as part of a risk assessment.



Spreading the use of the medication communication form

In December we launched the medication communication form and we have received reports that it is now being used across the city. The form has allowed clear messages to be transferred between the GP practice, the care home and the pharmacy and will reduce the possibility of errors. We would encourage GPs to use the form whenever they make a change to regular medication whilst at the surgery and fax this to the care home. The care home should then fax this on to the pharmacy so they are aware of the amendment. This will ensure accurate reconciliation of any changes by everyone.

Care of the Elderly Consultants from the Local Care Centre who visit service users will also use this form to ensure any messages they have about medication are clear. We would ask care homes to keep copies of the forms ready and the consultant will then complete one if relevant. Care homes should then fax the form on to both the GP and the pharmacy so they are aware of any changes to medication. The service user's GP will still receive a letter in the usual way with full details of the visit but this will ensure that everyone involved in the service user's care is clear about any changes to medication. A copy of the form is on the reverse of this newsletter.



**GP Surgery to Care Home
Communication of change to medication form**



From:	To:
GP name, address & telephone number, or stamp	Care home name & address

The medication for the following patient has been altered with immediate effect.

Patient name:	Date of birth:
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Details of change: (please print clearly and do not use abbreviations)
Include full details of all medication stopped, started and/or altered

Reason for change:

This change is PERMANENT / TEMPORARY (delete as appropriate)

GP print name and sign:	Date:
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Action taken: (please tick when carried out)

At GP Surgery:

- GP has completed form clearly and in full
- GP surgery has phoned care home to alert fax has been sent

At Care Home:

- MAR chart amended if necessary
- MAR checked by a second member of staff
- Care Home has faxed the form to Pharmacy for information