

# Vol 5. Issue 2: June 2024



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*MEDwatch is the e-bulletin for all NHS Grampian Staff who are involved with patients and medicine management.*

*Its aim is to improve the safety of medicines by sharing learning, and encouraging adverse event reporting from all staff groups.*

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## MHRA Drug Safety Newsletters

Latest MHRA Drug Safety Newsletters:

- [March 2024](#)
- [April 2024](#)
- [May 2024](#)

## Alerts, Notices & Shared Learning

### Shared Learning Summaries

Two Shared Learning Summaries have been issued since the last MedWatch Newsletter:

[Drug Fridge Temperature Monitoring](#) shared by ISCSP - Surgery highlights issues they identified when reviewing the Drug Fridge Monitoring Booklet as part of the Nurse Manager Medicines Management Audit and the impact incorrect monitoring can have on the safety of medication stored within fridges.

Issues identified included:

- Reading the Hi/Lo alarm settings rather than the actual temperature minimum/maximum readings
- Not clearing the thermometer after taking the reading
- Clearing the thermometer before taking the reading
- Hi/Low alarm settings not programmed appropriately (remain on factory settings rather than being set at Lo: 2°C/High: 8°C)
- Temperature deviations (where the fridge temperature goes outwith 2°C - 8°C) are not escalated as per the NHS Grampian Refrigerator Temperature Readings Procedure
- Potential reasons for temperature deviations are not being recorded on the yellow Temperature Recording and Checking Sheet e.g. stock expiry date check where the fridge door may be open for longer than usual
- Monthly review of expiry date check, thermometer alarm settings and recordings for the month are not being completed.

[Prep Room Doors](#) shares concerns raised regarding drug prep room doors' locking systems being temporarily disabled by the use of magnets or by propping drug prep room doors open. While not all drug preparation areas within NHS Grampian have lockable doors where they do they should be closed and locked at all times.

Lessons for sharing are:

- Lockable drug preparation rooms should have their doors locked at all times
- Objects (including magnets) should not be used to temporarily disable the locking system or keep the doors of drug preparation rooms' propped open
- There is a process to follow to enable bank staff to have the appropriate access to drug preparation rooms for their shift.

These along with all previous medicines related shared learning summaries can be found on the NHS Grampian [Medication Safety Intranet pages](#).

## Practical Advice for Clinical Areas Storing Medicines at Ambient Temperatures: Temperature Excursions

Medicines should be stored according to the directions on the packaging to ensure their continuing quality until they are administered to the patient. Some medicines require special storage requirements such as refrigeration or frozen but the majority will require storage at room temperature. Room temperature is also known as "ambient" temperature and different manufacturers will describe this in different ways on the packaging, usually anything between 8°C and 30°C. If the temperature goes below or above the temperature stated on the packaging this is known as a temperature excursion.

During summer months and in hot weather the temperature within drug storage areas can rise risking a potential temperature excursion. The effect of the temperature excursion on individual medicines will depend on a number of factors, such as how many degrees above the specified maximum temperature it was and how many days it was exposed to the excess temperature. In some cases there will be no risk associated with the temperature excursion and the medicine will be safe to use but for others risks include:

- shortened shelf life of the medicines e.g. the medicines can still be used but the expiry date or when it can be used by is amended.
- patient requires additional monitoring e.g. the medicine can still be used but the patient requires some monitoring post administration.
- medicines waste e.g. the medicine cannot be used at all and needs to be discarded.

The [Specialist Pharmacy Service](#) has some practical advice around what to do to reduce the risks associated with temperature excursions:

- Store medicines away from radiators and direct sunlight; a reflective film can be added to windows to reduce direct sunlight.
- Keep windows and doors closed as much as possible. Windows may be opened to aid cooling but only if it is colder outside than it is inside. Be aware of the security risk associated with open windows.
- Monitor stock turnover keeping stock levels to the minimum and ensuring stock is rotated. This means that:
  - in high stock turnover areas, the medicine will only be exposed to potential high temperatures for a brief period of time
  - in low stock turnover areas, the minimum quantity of medicines will be affected by a temperature excursion.

Within NHS Grampian, drug preparation room temperatures are not routinely monitored because it is rare that the temperature will exceed 30°C for a prolonged period of time. If however staff are finding the temperature within the drug preparation room to be hot they should take the following steps:

- take immediate remedial action checking and rectifying obvious causes e.g. door left open or blinds left open during a heatwave, air conditioning switched off.

- Contact pharmacy who will support you with temperature monitoring the area and will advise on what to do with the medicines where necessary.

## Contact

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