

Covert Administration Guidance

What is covert administration?

- Covert administration is the process of adding medicine to food or drink without the resident's knowledge or consent.

What is the need for covert administration?

1. If a person actively refuses their medicine- must explore reason for refusal first
 2. If that person is judged not to have the capacity to understand the consequences of their refusal. Such capacity is determined by the Mental Capacity Act 2005
 3. If the medicine is deemed essential to the person's health and wellbeing
- Covert administration of medicines should be a last resort. You must make reasonable efforts to give medicines in the normal manner. Explore other possible reasons for refusal; you should also consider alternative methods of administration. This could include, for example, liquid rather than solid dose forms.
 - Ask medications to be reviewed before to determine if they are all still needed.

Use the five key principles under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 to help determine whether someone has capacity to make decisions.

Mental capacity act 2005- 5 key principles:

1. You must assume they have capacity to do so unless it is proved otherwise. You must not assume someone lacks capacity because they have a particular medical condition or disability.
2. People have the right to make decisions that others might regard as unwise. You cannot treat someone as lacking capacity for this reason.
3. You should make every effort to encourage and support people to make the decision for themselves. Try alternatives e.g. Liquids
4. Anything you do or decide for or on behalf of a person who lacks mental capacity must be in their best interests.
5. When making a decision or acting on behalf of a person who lacks capacity, you must consider:
 - whether there is a way that would cause less restriction to the person's rights and freedoms of action
 - whether there is a need to decide or act at all

Medication review

- Medicines should be reviewed to ensure that the medication is still indicated prior to covert administration being considered.
- You must identify the need for covert administration for each medicine prescribed.
- Each time new medicines are added; you must identify the need again and seek pharmacist advice on administration.

Best interests meeting

- Medicines should not be administered covertly until after a best interests meeting has been held. Those involved should include care home staff, prescriber and family or advocate.
- If the situation is urgent, it is acceptable for a less formal discussion to occur between all parties to make an urgent decision.
- This should be fully documented. However, a formal meeting should be arranged as soon as possible.
- Hold 'best interest meetings' when new medicines are prescribed or doses changed. This will help to make sure treatment continues to be in the person's best interest.

Documentation required – care plan

- Record of reasons for presuming mental incapacity and proposed management plan with timescales and considerations for a review, including consideration of Deprivation of Liberty Standards (DoLS) when medicines, such as sedatives, are to be given covertly.
- Ensure care plan details are clear and specific so that anyone caring for the resident can administer the medications agreed covertly.

Administration for covert administration

This includes checking with a pharmacist the safety and efficacy of giving the medicines covertly, how to administer the medicines and any relevant interactions information- A record of this advice should be documented.

Regular review need for covert administration

- Capacity can fluctuate
- Need for certain medications can change

References:

1. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Quality standard 85. *Medicines management in care homes*. (Links to an external site.)[Links to an external site.](#) 2015.
2. NICE SC1 Managing medicines in care homes
3. PRESCQIPP website <https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/bulletins/bulletin-101-care-homes-covert-administration/>
4. Care Quality Commission website <https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/adult-social-care/administering-medicines-covertly>