

### Why this matters?

Medications are a common source of accidental harm in children and can also pose significant risks during periods of emotional distress. Even widely used medicines such as paracetamol and ibuprofen can be dangerous if taken incorrectly or in large amounts.

Simple steps, including safe storage and controlled access can make a difference in reducing these risks. This briefing is a gentle reminder designed to support our community and promote safe practices to help keep everyone in the home protected.

### What Medications May Be Kept at Home

- A **small amount of non-prescribed medication** may be kept, for example:
  - Paracetamol (for pain or fever)
  - Cough medicines
  - Antihistamines
- These must be stored **together with any prescribed medications** and must not be kept separately or left loosely around the home.

### Secure Storage (Essential Requirement)

- **All medication must be stored securely and safely** and be inaccessible to children or anyone at risk.
- A **locked cupboard or lockbox** must be used as the default standard.
- Medicines must be stored **out of sight and out of reach** (high-level placement).
- Medicine must not be left unattended on counters, bedside tables, or in bags.
- Child-resistant packaging is helpful but **not sufficient on its own**.
- A small lockable box may be required for any medication that needs to be stored in a **refrigerator**.
- Safe storage of medicines must be discussed and recorded as part of risk assessments and/ or care plans.

## Safe Storage of Medication & Risk Reduction Briefing



### Access & Supervision

- Access to medication must be **controlled by a responsible adult**.
- Independent access must only be permitted if **assessed as safe and appropriate**.
- In higher-risk situations, **supervised dispensing should be used** (e.g., daily doses provided).

### Control Quantities

- Avoid storing large quantities of medication in the home,
- Request **smaller prescriptions** where clinically appropriate.
- Consider pharmacy-prepared **blister packs** or monitored dosage systems to limit access to bulk amounts.
- Over-counter medicines must not be stockpiled.

### Keep Medicines in Original Packaging

- Medicine must always be kept in the **original labelled containers**.
- Medicine must not be mixed or transferred into unlabelled or alternative containers. This helps ensure correct dosing, clear identification, and accurate monitoring of medication use.

### Safe Use Around Children

- Medicine must never be described as “sweets” to encourage acceptance.
- Adults should take their own medication **out of sight of children** to prevent imitation.
- Medicines must be returned to secure storage immediately after use.

### Regular Review & Disposal

- Medicines must be checked routinely to ensure they are within their expiry dates.
- Unused or discontinued medicines must be removed from the home promptly.

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- Pharmacy 'take-back' or medicine return services must be used for safe disposal; medicines must not be disposed of in household waste or flushed away.

### Additional Safeguards for Vulnerable Periods

- Increase supervision and reduce any agreed independent access to medication if someone is distressed or experiencing a vulnerable period.
- Review safety arrangements to ensure they remain sufficient including double-checking locked storage and confirming that all medication including **non-essential medications or over the counter medications are together.**
- Limit access to other potentially harmful substances in the home.

### Quick Checklist

- Locked & Secure storage in place
- All medications stored **together** securely
- Only small quantities of medication kept
- Access controlled or supervised where required
- No medicines left unattended
- Expired/unused medicines removed
- All household members are aware of the rules and expectations

### Emergency & Support (UK)

NHS 111: for advice when it is not a life-threatening emergency

999: if there is immediate danger or risk to life

Samaritans: 116 123: for 24/7 emotional support