



Medicines and Dehydration

Updated Briefing for Professionals
on the Medicine Sick Day Rules card

This updated briefing outlines the revision to the card and now includes space to identify other medicines that the sick day rules apply to.



What is the potential problem?

Dehydration can be a significant risk for people taking certain medicines. Therefore NHSScotland and the Scottish Patient Safety Programme have produced a 'Medicine Sick Day Rules' card that lists medicines that should be temporarily stopped during illness that can result in dehydration (vomiting, diarrhoea and fever).

The list of medicines was shared with health professionals in the revised NHSScotland Polypharmacy Guidance, published by Scottish Government in 2018.



Why these medicines?

The list of medicines on the card is not exhaustive but they are highlighted because:

- **Diuretics** can cause dehydration or make dehydration more likely in an ill patient.
- In a dehydrated patient **ACE inhibitors, ARBs** and **NSAIDs** may impair kidney function which could lead to kidney failure.
- Dehydration increases the risk of lactic acidosis, a serious and potentially life-threatening side effect of **metformin**.

The card has been updated to provide additional space for health professionals to identify any other medicine a patient is taking that the sick day rules also apply to.



What advice should I give patients?

To ensure patients understand the information on the card, it is suggested that patients should be offered the following explanation at the time they are given a card:

- some medicines shouldn't be taken when you have an illness that makes you dehydrated. This is because they can either increase the risk of dehydration or because dehydration can lead to potentially serious side effects of the medicine.
- The medicine you are taking that falls into this category is *[tell patient which medicine and tick or write the medicine on the card]*.
- Illnesses that cause dehydration are: vomiting, diarrhoea and fever.

This advice does not apply to minor sickness and diarrhoea, which means a single episode.

Community pharmacists may find that provision of one of these cards could support a consultation under the Chronic Medication Service.



What does the card look like?

The card is credit-card sized and printed on both sides:

NHS
SCOTLAND

Medicine Sick Day Rules

When you are unwell with any of the following:

- Vomiting or diarrhoea (unless only minor)
- Fever, sweats and shaking (unless only minor)

Then STOP taking the medicines ticked on the other side of this card by your healthcare professional

Restart when you are well (after 24-48 hours of eating and drinking normally)

If you are in any doubt, contact your pharmacist, doctor or nurse

Version 2, 2018

24 HOUR PATIENT SAFETY PROGRAMME

Medicines to stop on sick days

- ACE inhibitors:** medicine names ending in “pril”
- ARBs:** medicine names ending in “sartan”
- Diuretics:** eg, furosemide, bendroflumethiazide
- Metformin:** a medicine for diabetes
- NSAIDs:** eg, ibuprofen, diclofenac, naproxen

Other medicines to stop taking

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Initially produced by NHS Highland

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