

2. Monitored Dosage Systems (MDS)

2.1. Service summary

The Equality Act requires pharmacy contractors to make adjustments to their dispensing service to support patients with a disability to manage their medication (self-medicating patients only, there is no requirement to provide services for the convenience of carers). If the patient is covered by the Act, the pharmacist will assess the patient to determine what type of adjustment may be appropriate. Adjustments could include easy open containers, large print labels, reminder sheets and if necessary a monitored dosage system (these are not the answer to every problem!). The use of original packs with support is the preferred option¹

2.2. Getting the most from the service

Assessment

- Provision of MDS packaging is a decision for the pharmacist. GPs may not direct pharmacists to supply in MDS, but they may refer patients to the community pharmacy for assessment for medicine usage problems.
- Not all medicines and dosage regimes are suitable for MDS. Some medicines deteriorate when removed from their original packaging, and it may not be helpful to package 'as required' medicines into an MDS. Having some medicines in MDS and others in the original packaging means the patient has to manage two systems which may be more difficult for them to manage.

Prescription duration

- Prescribers who have historically provided 7 day prescriptions to support MDS packaging should review this in line with the guidance below, but this **must** be done in discussion with local pharmacists to avoid adverse impact on patients.
- **There is no link between prescription duration and type of packaging; a prescription for 28 days supply could be dispensed in an MDS, and a prescription for 7 days supply could be dispensed in the original pack. The packaging is a decision for the pharmacist, independent of the prescription duration. The supply period is a clinical decision for the prescriber, independent of the packaging.**
- Pharmacy contractors receive NHS funding to support patients with a disability to manage their medicines. Patients and carers who prefer MDS but are not eligible under the Equality Act may have to pay.
- If care homes or social care agencies want particular packaging for the convenience of their staff, they must arrange this with the pharmacy. GP practices should not provide 7 day prescriptions to fund the packaging.

Changes to prescriptions

- Pharmacists are not expected to make changes to medication once it has been dispensed, whether or not it is packaged in MDS. If a patient has an MDS pack and the prescriber changes or adds a medicine part way through the pack, it is up to the prescriber to determine whether the patient can safely manage the change including having a new item in a separate pack, or whether a new prescription for all items is necessary as an adjustment under the Equality Act.
- It may reduce waste to prescribe 7 days at a time for patients who use MDS and whose medication is frequently changing – this is a clinical decision for the prescriber

2.3. For more information

¹[The better use of multi-compartment compliance aids](#) RPS July 2013