



Medication Safety Series: MSS29

Managing medicines safely in hot weather

Fluids & Hydration

- Everyone is at risk of dehydration in hot temperatures, but babies, children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable.
- Fluid requirements are higher than normal in hot weather and after strenuous activity, to replace fluids lost through sweating.
- [Gov.UK](#) advice recommends drinking plenty of fluids - water, lower fat milks, tea and coffee are good options. Fruit juice, smoothies and soft drinks count towards fluid intake, but can be high in sugar. Limit fruit juice and smoothies to a combined total of 150 ml per day; substitute sugary soft drinks with diet, sugar-free or “no added sugar” varieties.

Signs of dehydration in adults & children include:

Feeling thirsty, dark yellow, strong-smelling urine, urinating less often than usual, feeling dizzy/lightheaded, feeling tired, dry mouth, lips & tongue, sunken eyes

- It is particularly important for patients taking regular medication to ensure they are adequately hydrated during periods of hot weather, but to be aware of the risks of water intoxication if too much fluid is consumed, for more information see [Choice & Medication Factsheet](#)
- **LITHIUM:** it is even more important that patients taking lithium maintain good levels of hydration, dehydration can cause increases in lithium levels which may cause toxicity. More detailed advice for patients about avoiding the effects of hot weather and dehydration is available as a [Choice & Medication factsheet](#).

Signs of lithium toxicity:

Shaking hands ('tremor'), tummy ache, feeling sick, diarrhoea, muscle weakness, unsteady on feet, muscle twitches, slurring of words, blurred vision, confusion & feeling unusually sleepy

A [Choice & Medication poster](#) summarising risks associated with hot weather and how to manage them is available to display in areas accessed by patients.

Sun Protection

- During periods of sunny weather, high factor sunscreen preparations may be applied or offered to patients without a prescription or prescriber review, provided this is documented in the electronic patient record.
- Some medicines sensitise the skin to the effects of UV radiation. Patients taking the following medicines need to protect their skin from sunlight even on a bright but cloudy day – *acitretin, adapalene, amiodarone, chlorpromazine, ciclosporin, demeclocycline, doxycycline, isotretinoin*

More information: [Medicines – prescribing & initiation of treatment procedure – section 15.3](#)

Protecting Medication

In wards / team bases

- Utilise air conditioning in the right mode, where available, to maintain clinic room temperature <25°C at all times; report faults with air con to estates immediately
- The ambient temperature of any room used to store medicines outside a refrigerator must be monitored and recorded at least once daily on the temperature monitoring sheet. It is best practice for this recording to take place during the afternoon, in order to account for peak room storage temperatures and enable appropriate action to be taken in a timely manner.
- Remember the four “R’s”:
 - **Read** the thermometer
 - **Record** the temperature
 - **Reset** the thermometer
 - **React** to any temperature excursions (room temperature >25°C)



Away from team bases (antipsychotic depot injections for home visits)

- In line with the [Trust depot procedures](#) take only single doses away from the team base to avoid unnecessary exposure of stock to high temperatures.
- Return any unused injections to the team base at the end of the day; if this is delayed or any concerns about prolonged exposure to high temperature in a hot car, seek pharmacy advice about product stability

More information: [Appendix 6 – Medicines - ordering, storage, transfer, security & disposal procedure](#)

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