

## Mosby's Nursing Video Skills

### Procedure Guideline for Administering Oral Medications

1. Verify the health care provider's orders.
2. Gather the necessary equipment and supplies.
3. Perform hand hygiene.
4. Prepare the medication:
  - A. As you work, avoid interruptions. Keep the door to the medication room closed, and do not accept telephone calls. Follow your agency's "No Interruption Zone" policy.
  - B. Arrange the medication tray and cup in a drug preparation area. Access the automated dispensing system, or unlock the medicine drawer or cart.
  - C. Prepare medications for *one patient at a time*. Follow the six rights of medication administration. (Refer to the video skill "Ensuring the Six Rights of Medication Administration").
  - D. Select the correct drug from the automated dispensing system, unit-dose drawer, or stock supply. All medications must be verified three times. Confirm the name of the medication by comparing the label with the Medication Administration Record (MAR). **This is your first check.**
  - E. If the dosages on the label do not match the dosage prescribed, check or calculate the correct amount of medication to give. Double-check any calculation. Check the expiration date of all medications, and return outdated medication to the pharmacy.
  - F. To prepare a unit-dose tablet or capsule, compare the packaged tablet or capsule with the MAR, and then put it into the medication cup without removing the wrapper. Administer a unit-dose medication only from a clearly labeled container. If any medication is not clearly labeled, do not administer it.
  - G. If you are giving tablets and capsules, use a single medication cup. Medications that require a pre-assessment, such as apical pulse or blood pressure measurement, should be placed in a separate medication cup as a reminder to perform the assessment.
  - H. If your patient only needs half of a tablet or pill, ask the pharmacy to split, label, package, and send the medication to the unit. If you must split a scored tablet, use a clean pill-cutting device. Split the tablet and discard the other half. Do not split a tablet or caplet that has not been scored by the manufacturer.
  - I. If the patient has difficulty swallowing, crush each medication separately using a pill-crushing device. Mix the ground tablet into a small amount (about a teaspoon) of soft food, such as custard or applesauce. Remember to give each crushed medication separately.

- J. Controlled substances will be stored in a secured locked compartment of the dispensing unit. When you retrieve a controlled substance, check the controlled drug record for the previous count, and compare it with the supply remaining to be sure they match. Never leave any medication unattended.
  - K. Before going to the patient's room, verify the patient's name on the MAR with the labels on the prepared drugs to confirm the drug name and the patient's name. **This is your second check.** If using an automated dispensing system, log out after you remove the drugs.
5. Take oral medication to the patient at the correct time (see agency policy). Give time-critical medications (i.e., STAT and NOW doses) at the precise time ordered. During administration, apply the six rights of medication administration.
6. Administer the medication:
- A. Perform hand hygiene.
  - B. Provide for the patient's privacy.
  - C. Introduce yourself to the patient and family, if present.
  - D. Identify the patient using two identifiers.
  - E. For highly acidic medications (e.g., aspirin), offer the patient a nonfat snack (e.g., crackers) if not contraindicated by the patient's condition.
  - F. At the patient's bedside, again compare the MAR with the names of the medications on the medication labels and with the patient's name. **This is your third check.**
  - G. Perform necessary pre-administration assessment (e.g., blood pressure, pulse) for specific medications.
  - H. Discuss the purpose of each medication, its action, and possible adverse effects. Allow the patient to ask questions.
  - I. Administer tablets or capsules with the patient in a sitting or side lying position. The patient may wish to hold solid medications in his or her hand or in the cup before placing them in his or her mouth. Offer water or the patient's preferred liquid to help swallow the medications, as long as it is compatible with the medication
7. For liquid medications:
- A. Thoroughly mix liquids before administration by shaking the container gently. If a drug is in a unit-dose container with the correct volume, shaking is not necessary. If the drug is in a multi-dose bottle, remove the bottle cap from the container and place the cap upside-down on your work surface.

- B. Hold the label of the bottle against the palm of your hand as you pour to protect the label's integrity.
  - C. Place a medication cup on a level surface where it can be read at eye level, and pour the liquid to the desired level. The printed or embossed line indicating the correct dosage should be even with the bottom of the fluid meniscus or the surface of the liquid.
  - D. Wipe the lip and neck of the bottle with a paper towel, and recap the bottle.
  - E. If you're giving less than 10 mL of liquid, prepare the medication in an oral syringe. Do not use a hypodermic syringe or a syringe with a needle or syringe cap.
8. For orally disintegrating formulations (tablets or strips): Remove the medication from the packet just before administering it. Tear the package open carefully. Do not push the tablet through the foil. Place the medication on top of the patient's tongue. Caution him or her against chewing the medication.
  9. For buccally administered medications: Have the patient place the medication in his or her mouth against the mucous membranes of the cheek and gums until it dissolves.
  10. For sublingually administered medications: Have the patient place the medication under the tongue and allow it to dissolve completely. Caution the patient against chewing or swallowing the tablet. Caution the patient against chewing or swallowing lozenges.
  11. For powdered medications: Mix with liquids at the bedside and give the mixture to the patient to drink.
  12. If the patient is unable to hold medications, place the medication cup to his or her lips and gently introduce each drug into the mouth, one at a time. Be patient and do not rush or force medication administration. A spoon can also be used to place the pill in the patient's mouth. If necessary, using a gloved hand, place the medication directly into the patient's mouth.
  13. Stay until the patient completely swallows each medication or takes it by the prescribed route. Ask the patient to open his or her mouth if you are not certain whether he or she has swallowed the medication.
  14. Help the patient return to a comfortable position.
  15. Dispose of soiled supplies, and perform hand hygiene.
  16. Place toiletries and personal items within reach.
  17. Place the call light within easy reach, and make sure the patient knows how to use it to summon assistance.

18. To ensure the patient's safety, raise the appropriate number of side rails and lower the bed to the lowest position.
19. Leave the patient's room tidy.
20. Document the medication administration immediately after administration, not before.
21. As follow up care, keep an eye on the patient to see his or her response to the medication.