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## Managing appointments, treatments and medications as a carer

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### Summary

- Carers can help the person they care for go to all their appointments, follow their treatment and take their medication correctly. Keep up-to-date of the person's appointments by using a single notebook or diary to record all the dates and times. Using the calendar in your phone is another good option.
  - It might be your job to make sure the person sticks to their treatment plan. Understanding the treatment plan and telling the person's doctor about any problems is important.
  - Medicines can be dangerous if it is not taken correctly. Find out what each medicine is for and how it should be taken. Ask the doctor or pharmacist if you are unsure about anything.
  - Make sure the person's doctor has a full list of the medicines and treatments the person is having, including any complementary medicines.
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Carers often organise appointments and treatments for the person they are caring for and help with medicines.

### Managing appointments

As a carer, it may be your responsibility to manage the person's medical appointments. This may include making the appointment, providing transport and sitting with them when they meet with a healthcare professional.

When you are making a doctor's appointment for the person you care for, let the receptionist know if you need an immediate appointment or if it can be scheduled later in the week. If you are worried about waiting a long time for your appointment, ask for one of the first appointments of the day. You should also let them know if you:

- would like an interpreter (they will need to arrange for this ahead of time)
- specifically want to see either a male or female doctor
- have any special needs, such as wheelchair access.

If the medical appointment is for tests, ask how you need to prepare the person. They may have to fast (not eat or drink) before a blood test, for example. You may also have to make a follow-up appointment to discuss the test results.

If you need to make appointments with multiple healthcare professionals, tell each professional about the other appointments. That way, and with the person's permission, they can share any information and treatment recommendations.

To keep track, it may help to use a single notebook or diary to record all the person's appointments. Using calendar app in your phone is another good option.

For more information see the [Making and managing appointments](#) fact sheet.

### Medical treatment plans

As the carer of a person with an illness, disability, older person with care needs, or a health condition, it may be up to you to make sure the person puts their medical treatment plan into action.

A treatment plan by a healthcare professional guides the person on the road to recovery or helps reduce their symptoms, allowing them to live their best life possible.

Treatment plans change to suit the needs of the person based on:

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- how sick they are
- treatment results – stopping treatments that are not working and increasing treatments that are
- how much supports the person has.

The treatment plan outlines how the person's health problem will be managed. For each health problem, the treatment plan should clearly look at:

- what the problem is
- what the goals of treatment are (short- and long-term goals)
- how these goals will be achieved.

The plan should also describe how health problems will be managed, including:

- the type of treatment (for example, group versus individual counselling)
- how often treatment will be needed
- who is responsible for treatment
- when and how the person's progress will reviewed.

The treatment plan should prioritise between problems that need immediate attention and those that are less urgent.

If you or the person you care for at any time feels that the treatment plan is not working, contact their doctor or the healthcare professional who wrote the treatment plan to discuss other options.

### **Taking medicines safely**

Some people may take a range of medicines (including prescription, over-the-counter and complementary medicine) to treat different health or medical conditions.

Medicine can make a significant difference to a person's life – they can prevent and treat disease, increase life expectancy and improve quality of life. But they can also cause harm. If medicines are not used correctly they have the potential to have a negative effect on health.

Here are some tips for managing medicines.

- **Read the consumer medicine information.** Most prescription and many over-the-counter medicines have a consumer medicine information (CMI) leaflet. These are available from your doctor or pharmacist and are a good starting point for learning more about a medicine. You can also find out more information about your medicine from [NPS MedicineWise](#).
- **Ask questions.** If you are unsure about anything to do with the person's medicine, double-check with their doctor or pharmacist. You can also ask the pharmacist to review all the medicines to make sure they are still the right ones to be taking.
- **Tell their doctor or other healthcare professional about all medicines.** All medicines have the potential to cause unwanted side effects and can be dangerous if taken in combination with certain other treatments. Let all healthcare professionals know about the medicines the person is taking, including complementary medicines.
- **Plan the medicines.** Know how much medicine the person has left to give yourself plenty of time to refill their prescription, to ensure they never run out.
- **Keep a list of medicines.** Maintaining a list all of the person's medicines, including the dosage and instructions for use, will help you keep track. Keeping the list in your phone will ensure you always have it with you.
- **Use a dose administration aid.** Ask the pharmacist to fill in a dose administration aid (often called a 'dosette box') for each day of the week.
- **Do not share medicines.** Taking medicine that is meant for someone else can be very dangerous. It is important not to give the person someone else's medicines (or to give their medicine to someone else).
- **Dispose of out-of-date medicines.** Never give the person expired medicine. Check the date on the packet or container. Either throw it in the rubbish bin or return it to the pharmacy.

For more information about using medicines safely, read the **Safe Medicine Use** fact sheet.

### **Where to get help**

- Your doctor
- Your pharmacist

### **This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:**

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