

Taking your own medicines on maternity wards

Maternity Department Patient information

What is self-administration?

It means taking responsibility for your own medicines while you are in hospital. If you do this then you:

- do not have to wait for a midwife
- can look after yourself
- can take pain relief at the right time for you
- get your medicine even if you are not present during the medicine rounds

There are also the following benefits:

- **Follow your schedule:** take medicines when it suits you best.
- **Learn about health:** learn what your medicines do.
- **Safety:** practice taking medicines safely before going home.

How does it work?

- **Your choice:** You do not have to do this if you do not want to
- **No pressure:** Saying no will not change your care.
- **The check:**
 - A midwife or pharmacy team member talks with you.
 - They check if you can easily use the medicines.
 - They make sure you can reach and use the locked medicines box.
- **Your supply:** Midwives will give you medicines with your name on them. You can sometimes use medicines brought from home.
- **Extra medicines:** The hospital gives a 2 to 4-week supply of new medicines.
- **GP letter:** Your family doctor gets a letter about changes to your medicines.
- **Safety:** The ward team explains doses, timings, and side effects.
- **Tracking:** You get a chart to tick off your doses.
- **Stronger pain relief:** Ask a midwife if you need it.
- **Breastfeeding:** Your medicines are considered safe to take if you are giving your baby your milk. They will not hurt you or your baby.

What happens if things go wrong?

If you take the wrong medicines or too many, tell a midwife right away.

If you forget to take your medicines, tell a midwife straight away.

How do I store my medicines?

- **Bedside locker:** Medicines stay in a locker on the wall in your room
- **Secret code:** Your midwife helps you set a private code for locker.
- **Own pills:** Keep your home medicines inside this locker too.
- **Special medicines:** Fridge items and strong painkillers stay with your midwife.
- **Ask staff:** Ask for these special medicines from your midwife.

Never share your medicine with anyone else.

Can I stop my medicines?

- **Do not stop:** Always ask a doctor or midwife first.
- **Quick danger:** Stopping your medicines suddenly can make you very poorly.
- **Side effects:** Tell staff if your medicines make you feel unwell.

What if I am running low?

- **Tell staff:** Contact your midwife as soon as possible or when you have got two days left
- **Top-up:** The pharmacist will send up more

What happens during ward checks?

- **Chart check:** The midwife looks at your paper chart.
- **Ticking off:** They mark down that you are taking your medicines.

Important safety rules

- **Safe mix:** **Your prescribed medicines are considered safe to take together.**
- **Lock it:** Always lock your medicines locker.
- **Keep away:** Store medicines away from children and visitors.
- **Stop pain:** Take pain relief medicines on a regular basis.
- **Safe sleep:** Strong pain killers can make you drowsy. Never fall asleep while holding your baby
- **Clear out:** Take your medicines home when you leave.
- **Leftovers:** Take your medicine with you when you go home. If you leave any behind, we will safely throw it away

Moving to a different ward

- **Rule changes:** Other hospital wards might use different systems.
- **Handover:** Tell new staff exactly what you take.
- **Safe keeping:** Give them your medicines to look after.

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