



Lesson 3: Working with Medication

After completing this lesson you will be able to:

1. Describe the five steps that indicate that medications have been taken properly. (Five rights)
2. Recognize medication errors.
3. Accurately read a prescription label and over-the-counter medication label.
4. Describe the questions that are important to be answered before using new medications.
5. Describe how to properly store medications.
6. Demonstrate appropriate hand-washing and hygiene techniques.
7. Describe situations in which a medication needs to be destroyed and how to destroy it.

OJT List

On-the-Job Training (OJT) statements are observable measures of skill that a person can demonstrate. These are the OJT statements for *Lesson #3: Working with Medications*.

- The direct support professional routinely checks for changes in the overall health and medication support needs of person(s) being supported at the start of each shift.
- The direct support professional uses reliable methods for assuring he or she correctly identifies the right person each time he or she assists with medications.
- The direct support professional observes good habits in medication support including storing, labeling, administering, and recording medications in ways that reduce the likelihood of errors.
- The direct support professional seeks guidance from others (such as an agency nurse or prescribing doctor) as needed, based on the need for clarification, and as required by laws and agency policies in the area of medication supports.
- The direct support professional knows when a timing error has occurred.
- The direct support professional handles timing errors appropriately, safely, and in a timely manner.
- The direct support professional is aware of both the formal and informal policies, procedures, and practices of his or her employer with regard to medication support.
- The direct support professional can accurately identify the information on a prescription label that is critical to observing the five rights including: the person's name; the name of medication; the strength and dose of the medication; how to use the medication and any warning or precautions.
- The direct support professional can accurately identify the information on a prescription label that is NOT critical to observing the five rights, but may be helpful for other purposes including: The prescriber's name; the date the prescription was filled; the quantity or amount in the prescription; the expiration date; the number of refills available; the pharmacy contact information; and the prescription number.
- The direct support professional can accurately identify the following on an over-the-counter medication label: the name of the medication and its uses; the active ingredients; the directions for timing, route, and dosage; precautions or warnings; the inactive ingredients; the expiration date; and any storage requirements.
- The direct support professional is observed reading the label on an over-the-counter medication before assisting with administration.
- The direct support professional supports administration of over-the-counter medications as directed, taking into account the information on the label or insert, the policies and procedures of the employer, and any special directions from health care practitioners.
- The direct support professional watches for problem reactions to over-the-counter drugs and handles any problems effectively and safely.
- The direct support professional asks questions of pharmacists and prescribing health care practitioners to be sure that he or she fully understands the uses and potential problems with new medications and remedies.
- The direct support professional is observed storing medications in a manner that keeps them fresh and potent and is in keeping with any special directions for the medication.
- The direct support professional stores medications using the guidelines in the support setting and suggests improvements when the system is confusing or disorganized.

OJT List

- The direct support professional uses good hygiene and appropriate use of protective barriers while providing medication support.
- The direct support professional describes situations in which medications would need to be destroyed.
- The direct support professional ensures that unusable medications are destroyed in the proper way and in a timely manner.
- The direct support professional knows and practices effectively his or her responsibilities for medication destruction.
- The direct support professional can describe safe and effective methods for destroying medications available in his or her community.
- The direct support professional is observed correctly following all policies, procedures, rules, regulations, and laws when destroying medications.

Portfolio List

Portfolio samples are examples of work a person could place in a portfolio based on the content of this lesson. These are the Portfolio suggestions for *Lesson #3: Working with Medications*.

- The direct support professional includes documentation of a medication error he or she has made. A summary statement is included that describes 1) what the error was, including which of the five rights were not observed; 2) Why the error was made; 3) What the learner did in response to the error including finding out the outcome for the person he or she was assisting; 4) What changes the DSP made in order to prevent similar errors from happening again.
- The direct support professional (DSP) gathers a list of all the over-the-counter (OTCs) medications that a person he or she supports uses. Using product labels and inserts, the DSP identifies medications that: 1) Have a similar effect or are for the same purposes; 2) Should not be used together; 3) Should not be used with certain prescription drugs; 4) may cause harm to people with special needs. A summary statement regarding the OTCs should include recommendations regarding how their use can be made safer. For example, eliminating medications that should not be used together or using single ingredient rather than multi-ingredient medications when possible. The DSP also writes up the results of consultation contacts she or he has with pharmacists or other medical professionals. Through these contacts, the DSP asks focused questions about specific OTC medications and their uses.
- The direct support professional (DSP) provides documentation for an existing medication storage system that is used in the setting he or she provides supports. This documentation may include photographs of the original system combined with brief descriptive narration (written or recorded). An alternative approach is to create a brief video of the system with verbal commentary. The narration or commentary describes the current system and its strengths and weakness. The DSP makes suggested revisions to the storage system based on what he or she has learned in this course and elsewhere. He or she presents a proposal for improving the plan and implements the changes after approval has been obtained. A summary statement (written or verbal/video format) with the sample that describes the changes and the positive outcomes is included. If the DSP is not actually allowed to change the system, the statement could highlight perceived positive outcomes if the changes were made.



Reflect on the Policies, Procedures, or Practices of Your Employer

Please note: When reviewing organizational policies and procedures, you may find that your employer uses different terms than this course for medication supports. Or they may use similar terms, but differently, such as the “seven rights of medication administration.” Do not worry too much about the specific terms. The most important thing is that these polices, procedures, and practices help people get their medications correctly. If you work for an individual or family, instead of an organization, it is important to discuss practices that will reduce the chance that you will make medication errors. Use these questions as a guide to get the information you need.

1. What systems are in place to ensure that the direct support professional is informed of changes in medications before there is an opportunity to miss a medication? List them:

2. In your experience, do these systems work? What, if anything, could be improved?

3. What is considered a “timing error” by this employer? Is it different for different medications, or is it a standard time frame regardless of the possible effect on the person? What are you supposed to do in the case of a timing error?

4. Which routes of administration are direct support professionals allowed to assist with? List them:

5. Which routes of administration are direct support professionals not allowed to assist with? List them:

6. How is the direct support professional trained and supported in learning how to correctly assist with medications?

7. When an error is made, how is the direct support professional supposed to handle it? (How do they know which situations are emergencies? What do they do first? Who should they call? What follow-up are they responsible for?)



Reflect on the Policies, Procedures, or Practices of Your Employer

8. A direct support professional needs to have available the following phone numbers in an accessible place. Fill them in here: (NOTE: Ask if a copy can be kept in an accessible place in the support setting if not already.)
Poison control:

Emergency services: (Often 911)

Primary Health Care Practitioner: (name and number)

Pharmacist:

Emergency medical contact:

Reading Prescription Labels

Directions: Write your responses to the following questions and statements that appear on screen 18 of the lesson.

Think about being responsible for assisting this person with his medication if he or she could not communicate. Would the information on this label be enough for you to know what to do?

Write down all the questions you have about this medication and the five rights of medication administration so you have all the correct information before administering it. You can write your questions in your companion booklet or use the electronic note taking function of this program. When you have written down all the questions that you want or need answered, click on the “compare button” on the screen to see if your questions match with the ones in this lesson.



College of Direct Support, Medication Support: On-the-Job (OJT) Skills Test for Reading a Prescription Medication Label

I. Name of Person Being Observed (Learner): _____

II. Name of Person Doing the Observation (Skills Mentor): _____

III. Contact Information for the Skills Mentor (*required*):

Employer (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

The following information is part of the content in the course on Medication Support in the College of Direct Support (www.collegeofdirectsupport.com). A qualified skills mentor must be identified to help with the skills test (usually an employer designee or instructor).

IV. Directions:

1. Print this form and have it reviewed by the skills mentor.
2. The skills mentor adjusts the form to meet specific needs by:
 - a. Checking “N/A” on the form for skills not needed in the situation.
 - b. Adding additional skills in spaces provided.
 - c. After adding and deleting skills, numbering the skills in the order the learner is expected to perform them by placing a number in front of the skill (far left column on form).
3. The skills mentor helps the learner prepare for the test as necessary.
4. When the learner is ready, an observation is scheduled. Whenever possible this observation should be scheduled in the actual work setting. During the observation, the skills mentor:
 - a. May not prompt the learner.
 - b. Checks “Yes” for any step completed correctly.
 - c. Checks “No” for any step completed incorrectly and writes a comment clarifying why a skill was marked no.
 - d. Checks “N/A” and a comment if the skill cannot be observed.
5. The mentor fills in contact information and signs the form certifying his or her role in the testing. All parts of the form must be completed (I-V).
6. The mentor may keep a copy of the form as desired for employment purposes. The learner will want to retain a copy for his or her records.

The Skill Mentor provides a sample label to the person being observed (learner). The mentor may also provide the product and/or the pharmacy instructions. The learner must identify each part of the label as listed on the skills test. The learner can describe additional resources or questions he or she would want answered before assisting with the medication.

#	Skill	Achieved: (Check one)			Comments:
		Yes	No	N/A	
	The learner correctly identifies the name of the person for whom the medication is prescribed.				
	The learner correctly identifies the name of the medication.				
	The learner correctly identifies the strength of the medication.				



College of Direct Support, Medication Support: On-the-Job (OJT) Skills Test for Reading a Prescription Medication Label

#	Skill	Achieved: (Check one)			Comments:
		Yes	No	N/A	
	The learner correctly identifies the strength of the medication.				
	The learner correctly identifies the correct timing of the medication.				
	The learner correctly identifies the correct route in which the medication should be administered and any special preparation or technique that should be used.				
	The learner correctly identifies the proper dosage for the medication.				
	The learner correctly identifies precautions or warnings that should be noted.				
	The learner correctly identifies the expiration date of the medication.				
	The learner correctly describes how the medication is best stored.				
	The learner correctly identifies the name of the person who prescribed the medication.				
	The learner correctly identifies the date the prescription was filled.				
	The learner correctly identifies the prescription number.				
	The learner correctly identifies the quantity or amount in the prescription.				
	The learner correctly identifies the number of refills available.				
	The learner correctly identifies the name and contact number of the pharmacy.				
	The learner correctly identifies additional information he or she would need prior to administering the medication to ensure the five rights were observed (person, medication, timing, dosage, and route).				

V. By signing this form, I certify that I am qualified as a skills mentor in this area. I observed the learner perform these skills and the written comments and observations reflect the person's actual skills. I am the learner's (Check one):

Employer Classroom Instructor Skills Mentor Designated by the Employer Other _____

Signature of Skills Mentor: _____

Date of the Observation: _____



College of Direct Support, Medication Support: On-the-Job (OJT) Skills Test for Reading an Over-the-Counter Medication Label

I. Name of Person Being Observed (Learner): _____

II. Name of Person Doing the Observation (Skills Mentor): _____

III. Contact Information for the Skills Mentor (*required*):

Employer (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

The following information is part of the content in the course on Medication Support in the College of Direct Support (www.collegeofdirectsupport.com). A qualified skills mentor must be identified to help with the skills test (usually an employer designee or instructor).

IV. Directions:

1. Print this form and have it reviewed by the skills mentor.
2. The skills mentor adjusts the form to meet specific needs by:
 - a. Checking “N/A” on the form for skills not needed in the situation.
 - b. Adding additional skills in spaces provided.
 - c. After adding and deleting skills, numbering the skills in the order the learner is expected to perform them by placing a number in front of the skill (far left column on form).
3. The skills mentor helps the learner prepare for the test as necessary.
4. When the learner is ready, an observation is scheduled. Whenever possible this observation should be scheduled in the actual work setting. During the observation, the skills mentor:
 - a. May not prompt the learner.
 - b. Checks “Yes” for any step completed correctly.
 - c. Checks “No” for any step completed incorrectly and writes a comment clarifying why a skill was marked no.
 - d. Checks “N/A” and a comment if the skill cannot be observed.
5. The mentor fills in contact information and signs the form certifying his or her role in the testing. All parts of the form must be completed (I-V).
6. The mentor may keep a copy of the form as desired for employment purposes. The learner will want to retain a copy for his or her records.

The Skill Mentor provides an over-the-counter label or product insert to the person being observed (learner). The learner must identify each part of the label as listed on the skills test. The mentor will also provide to the learner, a scenario or (fictional) example of a person to whom the learner could be providing support. This example will include the symptoms experienced, the age, gender, communication abilities, special conditions and other important information regarding the individual. The learner can describe whether the OTC would be appropriate for this person or not. The learner can describe additional resources or questions he or she would want answered before assisting with the OTC.

#	Skill	Achieved: (Check one)			Comments:
		Yes	No	N/A	
	The learner correctly identifies the name of the medication				
	The learner correctly identifies what the medication is for.				
	The learner correctly identifies the active ingredients in the medication.				



College of Direct Support, Medication Support: On-the-Job (OJT) Skills Test for Reading an Over-the-Counter Medication Label

#	Skill	Achieved: (Check one)			Comments:
		Yes	No	N/A	
	The learner correctly identifies the inactive ingredients in the medication.				
	The learner correctly identifies the directions for timing.				
	The learner correctly identifies the correct route in which the medication should be administered and any special preparation or technique that should be used.				
	The learner correctly identifies the proper dosage for the medications.				
	The learner correctly identifies precautions or warnings that should be noted.				
	The learner correctly identifies when the medication should be discontinued or a medical professional consulted.				
	The learner correctly identifies the expiration date of the medication.				
	The learner can describe how the medication is best stored.				
	In response to a scenario, the learner correctly identifies whether the medication would be appropriate for the person and/or additional questions the learner would want answered before deciding if the medication was appropriate. If the learner feels the medication is appropriate he or she must describe the proper dosage for the person in the scenario.				

V. By signing this form, I certify that I am qualified as a skills mentor in this area. I observed the learner perform these skills and the written comments and observations reflect the person's actual skills. I am the learner's (Check one):

Employer Classroom Instructor Skills Mentor Designated by the Employer Other _____

Signature of Skills Mentor: _____

Date of the Observation: _____



Questions About Medications

Medication Support Toolkit in the College of Direct Support

Before taking a new medication (prescription or over-the-counter), it is important to review some information. The first list will help you focus on collecting some key information during a visit with a health care provider. The second list can be taken to a pharmacy when selecting a new over-the-counter medication. Direct support professionals can review and share these lists with people they support before a medical appointment or before going to a pharmacy. They can use it as a tool to remember to get all the information needed when assisting someone with learning about new medications.

I. Prescription medications: Get the following information from your health care practitioner. Later, you can ask a pharmacist if you need clarification.

1. What is the medication called?
2. What is it for?
3. How often do I need to take it?
4. What should I do if I miss the time for my dose?
5. Are there special directions for this medication (For example, “Eat before taking this medication”)?
6. Do the other medications and therapies I take affect this medication? (Or will this medication affect my other medications and therapies?)
7. Are there any circumstances under which a person should not take this medication? (For example: pregnancy, certain disorders, when fasting, with alcohol?) What would happen?
8. Are there side effects I need to know when I take this medication?
9. Are there certain symptoms that may indicate a serious problem (adverse reactions) after taking this medication? If so, what are they?
10. What happens if I don't want to take this medication?
11. Are there alternatives to this medication?



Questions About Medications

Medication Support Toolkit in the College of Direct Support

II. Over-the-counter (OTC) medications, herbals, and nutritional supplements

You should know the following. Ask the pharmacist about it if it is not clear from the label.

1. What is it for? (How will I know if this OTC medication, herbal, or nutritional supplement does what it says it is supposed to do?)
2. How often can I take it?
3. Are there special directions for this OTC medication, herbal, or nutritional supplement? (Such as: “Take with food”)?
4. Will this OTC medication, herbal, or nutritional supplement affect my other medications and therapies? If so, how?
5. Are there any circumstances under which I should not take this OTC medication, herbal or nutritional supplement? (For example: pregnancy, certain disorders, when fasting, with alcohol?) What will happen if it is taken?
6. Are there certain symptoms that may indicate a serious problem after taking this OTC medication, herbal, or nutritional supplement? If so, what are they? What should I do?

Ask the pharmacist or other health care provider about anything that is not clear after reading the label.



Good Hygiene

During the skills test portion of the lesson on medication administration, you will be expected to demonstrate good hygiene and infection control procedures. This will include hand washing, keeping dispensers and medications clean, and proper use of protective barriers. If there is anything you do not understand, seek additional information from your skills mentor. The lesson on blood borne pathogens in the Safety Course can be very helpful. At minimum you need to know the answers to the following questions.

1. What, if any, procedures will you assist with that would need protective barriers and infection control procedures?
2. Where do you find protective barriers?
3. How are needles handled?
4. What incidents can occur that are considered an “exposure incident”?
5. What do you do if you or someone you support is involved in an “exposure incident”?

