

## Medication Safety Series: MSS 12

# Liquid oral medicines

In 2007 the NPSA issued a Patient Safety Alert promoting safer measurement and administration of liquid medicines via oral and other enteral routes and reducing risks of wrong route errors with oral liquid medicines.

In 2017 a SBARD in Relation to Medicine Pots used to Self-Harm by Patients was produced and circulated to all ward following reports of patients using plastic medicine pots to self-harm.

### When to use an oral (purple) syringe

**Always use an oral/enteral syringe to measure:**

1. Volumes less than 5 ml
  2. Prescription only oral liquids. These will state POM on label.
  3. All liquid formulations of Controlled Drugs (including benzodiazepines)
  4. Complex dose measurements
- Oral / enteral syringes are available in 1 ml, 3 ml, 5 ml, 10 ml and 20 ml sizes.
  - Choose the size that is nearest to the volume being administered.
  - Insert a plastic adaptor into the bottle opening so that the oral syringe can be inserted and easily filled without mess. Adaptors have a closure cap and can be left in the bottle.
  - If a plastic adaptor is not available or does not fit a bung can be used.
    - Obtain from pharmacy or Cardea
  - Oral syringes are for single use only
  - Used & empty oral / enteral syringes should be disposed of in the domestic waste

**NOTE: Some medications e.g. Denzapine liquid contain a syringe that must be used. These syringes are multiuse but must only be used for one patient.**

### When to use a plastic medicine pot

- Where there is a choking risk (see swallowing difficulties)
- Dispersible tablets
- Specific non-POM medicines, these are:
  - Lactulose / Senna / Docusate
  - Peptac / Gaviscon / antacids
  - Simple linctus
  - Paracetamol

**If using a plastic medicine pot you MUST complete and conduct a risk assessment considering the client group to ensure that patients could not use it as a means to self-harm.**

### Volumes > 20 mls

When measuring volumes above 20 ml you must use a graduated measuring cylinder. Contact the Trust Pharmacy Service for further information.

### Swallowing Difficulties

**Caution:** Do not administer medicines from an oral syringe to patients with swallowing difficulties; this may create a choking hazard.

Dependant on individual risk assessment, transfer to medicines pot or spoon to administer. For volumes less than 5ml consider using a spoon to avoid loss of dosage.

### Immediate Administration

**Every effort should be made to administer medicines immediately after preparation.** However, if preparation and administration is not one uninterrupted process and the syringe leaves the hands of the person who has prepared it, the syringe must be labelled with:

- the name and strength of the medicine
- the patient's name
- the date and time it was prepared
- the name of the person who has prepared the syringe

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