



Guidance on Optimizing Medication in Long-Term Care Facilities During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Rhode Island

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) offers this resourceⁱ from the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy and the US Deprescribing Network as a resource regarding prescribing of medications to patients in long-term care settings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As healthcare providers manage the daily medications for residents in nursing homes during this pandemic, an overarching guiding principle is to minimize transmission and spread of the virus. Strategies that limit the numbers of caregivers and interactions to only those that are medically beneficial may decrease transmission of the virus and further optimize staff operations.

This resource suggests interventions to minimize prescribing. Clinical decisions, such as streamlining prescribing, are at the **discretion of the attending physician** and should be done in collaboration with the patient and their family, as appropriate, while also balancing appropriate patient benefits and risks. These changes may include:

Medications that may be discontinued, reduced, or changed

- May include herbal medications, vitamins, and other medications that have limited or no proven benefit

Changes to how medications are administered and monitored

- Reduce the frequency of monitoring for drugs in people that are stable (i.e. heart rate, finger sticks).
- Change from short to long-acting formulations (i.e. anti-hypertensives, insulin, other diabetic medications).
- DO NOT use nebulizers. Use hand-held inhalers.

Appropriate alignment of medication administration times

- Ensure that medication times are optimized and consolidated so that they are administered the fewest times possible.

Medication issues specific to COVID-19 and infection prevention

- Avoid touching residents when delivering medications, if possible.
- Change acetaminophen from routine to PRN dosing to allow for fever surveillance for COVID-19. Avoid NSAIDs, if possible.
- Wash hands with soap and water before and after each resident.
- Wear appropriate PPE, including a surgical mask at **all** times for **all** patients. For patients who are known to be COVID-19 positive, wear a mask, eye protection, gown, and gloves.
- Staff should self-monitor for symptoms and NOT work if they have any symptoms of COVID-19.

RIDOH is aware several nursing home medical directors in Rhode Island have already implemented some of these strategies. RIDOH offers this suggested resource for your consideration and continues to be available to assist during this challenging time with some of our most vulnerable patients.

ⁱ University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, US Deprescribing Network, April 10, 2020, *Optimizing Medication Management During the COVID-19 Pandemic Implementation Guide for Post-Acute and Long Term Care*, <https://www.pharmacy.umaryland.edu/centers/lamy/optimizing-medication-management-during-covid19-pandemic/>