

## PROTOCOL FOR PRN MEDICATIONS

PRN or 'as needed' medications are often used to provide short-term relief of mild to moderate symptoms and may be ordered for specific physical complaints or symptoms such as fever, pain, or nausea. Note: They relieve symptoms (fever) rather than treat the illness (flu) causing the symptom.

Medications to modify behavior (psychotropic medications) cannot be given on a PRN basis.

PRN orders are to be individualized and included as a part of each consumer's medical orders and MAR. The use of "Standing Orders" is no longer permissible. Medications and treatments including over-the-counter preparations that are administered on an 'as needed'/PRN basis shall meet the following criteria:

1. All PRN orders must be specific to the person to whom they will be administered and shall be prescribed only for predictable or anticipated conditions specific to the person.
2. All orders must include the following information:
  - A. The name of the medication.
  - B. The purpose of the medications (indications for use including specific target signs and symptoms).
  - C. The dose of the medication. Orders shall not contain a range of dose (i.e., give 1-2 tablets).
  - D. Specific frequency for administration. Orders shall not contain time choices for administration (i.e., give every 4-6 hours; give 2-3 times per day).
  - E. The route of the medication.
  - F. How the medication is to be given (i.e., tablets – to be taken with meals, to be crushed).
  - G. Maximum allowance in 24 hours (i.e., no more than 8 tablets in 24 hours).
  - H. When to notify the primary care prescriber if symptoms continue.
3. Orders for conditions which are not predicted by past history or generally anticipated for the person shall not be included as PRN orders. Orders in those situations should be obtained specific to the occasion to avoid the administration of medications which may mask a more serious condition or delay appropriate intervention.
4. All medications (including over-the-counter) prescribed on a PRN basis shall be incorporated in the medical record and be reviewed and re-ordered at the same frequency as other medication orders.

## **OVERSIGHT NEEDED WHEN PRNS ARE GIVEN BY CERTIFIED MEDICATION TECHNICIANS**

1. The licensed nurse must determine the necessity of onsite assessment or telephone consultation prior to the administration of PRN medications by a Certified Medication Technician. If the licensed nurse determines that onsite assessment or telephone consultation is required, it will be noted on the consumers MAR. If it is the policy of the service provider that PRN medications cannot be given unless the licensed nurse is notified prior to administration, that information can be included in the Medication Administration policy and does not need to be noted on the MAR.
2. The licensed nurse must be contacted before a Certified Medication Technician can give a PRN medication for nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
3. The licensed nurse must be contacted if a PRN has been given for a 24 hour period without resolution of symptoms.

### **FOLLOW-UP AND DOCUMENTATION OF PRN MEDICATIONS**

1. Licensed nurses and Certified Medication Technicians are expected to document their observations regarding the effect of the PRN medications. Making this type of judgment is within the scope of practice for licensed nurses. Certified Medication Technicians; however, cannot assess the condition of the consumer, but can collect, document, and report information, not using nursing or medical judgement.

*For example: If the physician wrote an order for Tylenol 350 mg for fever > 100.0 F. The Certified Medication Technician administered Tylenol 350 mg for a fever of 101.0. Upon retaking the consumer's temperature in an hour, the Certified Medication Technician documented a decrease in temperature or no decrease in temperature. The Certified Medication Technician is simply collecting, documenting, and reporting information, not using nursing judgment about the action or the intervention.*

2. Observations regarding the effect of PRN medications are to be recorded as per directions in the Medication Administration policy.
3. The Certified Medication Technician is to notify the licensed nurse if PRN medication has been given for 24 hours and the symptoms have not been resolved.
4. The Certified Medication Technicians giving PRN medication will document any and all communications between themselves and the licensed nurse.