

CRICKLADE SURGERY MEDICATION STORAGE RECOMMENDATIONS

We recently sent out a Survey to a small number of patients regarding the storage of medications at home, and would like to share some guidelines to help our patients in the correct storage of medications.

1. We asked if medication needed to be kept in a fridge. Some medications do need to be kept in the fridge between 2-8oC -for example eyedrops, oral antibiotics and some creams. Other medications such as Insulin and inhalers are initially stored there-but can be taken out of the fridge whilst that pack is in use.
Try and keep any refrigerated medications in a separate storage box or area of the fridge.

We would always recommend referring to the Manufacturers instructions on the packaging. The most important rule for the correct storage of any medications is to store them below 25oC for their optimum effectiveness and stability.

2. Keep medications out of the reach and sight of Children. We are happy to report that all of our patients were adhering to this important advice.
3. We asked if medication was stored safely in a cool, dry place.

Patients reported that they were keeping medications in High cupboards or locked containers or drawers. This is ideal.

Medication needs to be stored away from heat and light sources and away from dampness as these can all damage the medication and affect their potency and effectiveness. Storage in Cars is not recommended due to the temperature changes within. Despite most households having a Bathroom Cabinet-it is not recommended for storage of medications due to the damp environment.

4. We asked how patients disposed of out of date or unused medication. Recent research indicates that up to 41% of the population dispose of their medication in their general waste, and our survey indicated that a small number of our patients have done so in the past.
This is dangerous as the medication could fall into the hands of Children or other Vulnerable members of the public and have potentially toxic elements that can degrade into land, water or the atmosphere when going to landfill.
Flushing medication down the sink or toilet is also polluting to the Environment.
A small number of patients reported burning medication-again this can release harmful chemicals or even explode as the stability of the medication would be unknown.
We have a clinical pharmaceutical waste disposal bin at the Surgery and this is sent away for safe incineration. All chemists also have this facility, except for the disposal of Sharps containers (eg needles etc.) which need to be collected by the local authority. We have the details for this at the Surgery should anyone require this.

5. We asked patients if they were carrying their medication alert card with them.

Some medications are issued with an alert card for patients to carry with them in wallet or purse to ensure that Clinicians are aware of the medication the patient is taking. This applies to Anticoagulant (blood thinners) medication, and patients taking Steroids on a permanent basis.

Only two of our patients reported that they did not do so.

6. We asked our patients if they kept their medications in the original dispensed containers.

This is always best practice as some packaging protects the medication from heat and moisture and have child proof closures.

This also ensures that the correct medication is being taken at the correct dose and time of day.

We appreciate that it is sometimes easier to put medications into daily or weekly containers which are now freely available to purchase. This is safe to do if the medication is not sensitive to absorbing moisture (eg Dispersible aspirin) and that the packaging and instructions have been considered (eg take one in the morning-before food)

We recommend that patients always have an up-to-date repeat card listing their medication both for their own reference and should an emergency situation occur clinicians and paramedics can get a quick guide to your health needs.

If you intend to travel it is always recommended that you keep medication in its original packaging, both to prove that it is yours and that it has been prescribed for you by a clinician. Keep in carry-on luggage and do not place in the hold to ensure a constant temperature.

In summary our patients are well informed about the medication they are taking, and the precautions needed to ensure the optimum safety and effectiveness of them.

Thank you to everyone who took part in our Survey.