

# SOP 29 Expiry date Checking (Dispensary and Front of Counter)

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Approved by (Supervising Pharmacist)	
Pharmacy to which this SOP relates	
Date of Implementation in this Pharmacy	
Roles to which this SOP relates	Pharmacists Pharmacy Assistants Pharmacy Interns/APPEL Students Pharmacy Technicians and Trainee Pharmacy Technicians Front of Counter Staff

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Context

The expiry date of a medicine is the point in time when a pharmaceutical product is no longer within an acceptable condition to be considered effective for a patient, or has the potential to do harm. The medication therefore has essentially reached the end of its useable shelf life as per the product SPC/manufacturers instruction.

Depending on the product, the expiry date may be set as a fixed time e.g. after manufacture, after dispensing or even after opening of the manufacturer's original container.

The supply or storage for sale of substandard or expired medicinal products is an offence.

### 1.2 Purpose

- Adherence to this SOP ensures that in Allcare pharmacies, medication will be supplied safely and with a useable shelf life to all patients, whilst adhering to the legislation and guidelines that govern this supply.
- **This SOP covers:**
  - Receipt and rotation of stock stored in the pharmacy
  - Process for date checking all medicinal products and medical devices on a quarterly basis
  - Patient counselling around short dated stock
  - Reducing waste resulting from short dated and expired pharmacy stock
  - Documentation and record keeping
- **This SOP must be used in conjunction with all relevant SOPs and guidance including:**
  - SOP 11 Preparation of medication into Monitored Dosage Systems
  - SOP 13 Managing Pharmacy Errors and Near Misses
  - SOP 19 Sourcing, Storage, and Disposal of Medicinal Products
  - PSI Pharmacy Practice Guidance (Current Version)
  - Regulation of Retail Pharmacy Businesses Regulations 2008 (S.I. No. 488 of 2008)

### 1.3 Scope

- This SOP applies to all staff in the pharmacy.
  - It is the ultimate responsibility of the supervising pharmacist to ensure that all staff are appropriately trained, and the SOP is implemented.
  - It is also the responsibility of the supervising pharmacist to ensure this SOP reflects the day-to-day practice in their pharmacy.
  - All pharmacists are expected to exercise their professional judgement when needed.

### 1.4 Staff training

All staff in the pharmacy who may be involved in the receipt and supply of any medication, medical device or front of shop product in the pharmacy (including pharmacists, pharmaceutical assistants, technicians, trainee technicians, interns, APPEL students and front of shop staff) should be trained on this SOP.

## 2 Procedure

### 2.1 Receiving medicinal and other products into the pharmacy

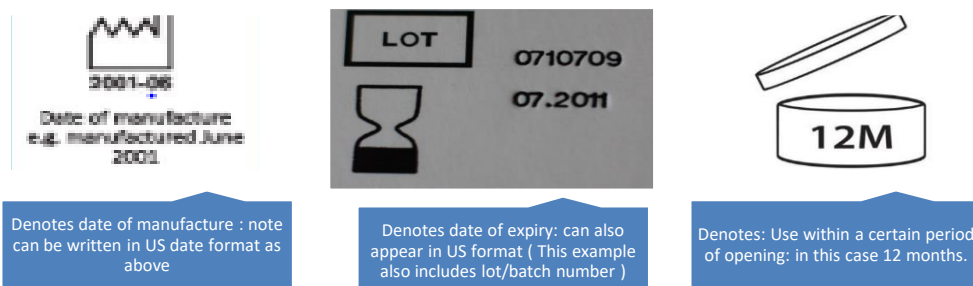
- All pharmacy products must be date checked upon receipt from the wholesaler.

- Products (with some exceptions e.g. dietary supplements) with an expiry date of less than 6 months not intended for immediate use must be returned to the supplier via the return's procedure for that wholesaler within 10 days.
- Cold chain products may not be returned as per the HPRA.
- All returns to Uniphar wholesale should be logged using the online returns portal in the 'My Account' section of the Uniphar website ([www.uniphar.ie](http://www.uniphar.ie)). If you have any difficulty in accessing your account details or to obtain a login, please contact Uniphar Customer Service team:
  - Email: [css@uniphar.ie](mailto:css@uniphar.ie)
  - Tel: +353 1 468 7501
- Products should be placed in order of increasing length of expiry date in storage drawers or on the pharmacy shelves, i.e. longest dated stock is placed at the back or to the bottom of the shelf each time.

## 2.2 Date checking process

- All dispensary and front of shop (all sections) stock must be date checked every 3 months at a minimum, and this record must be retained in the pharmacy to demonstrate compliance.
- Use SOP29 Appendix 1: Date Checking Logs to plan and record date checking.
- Fill in the areas of the pharmacy to be checked according to the requirements within your pharmacy; include all areas where stock is stored.
- The person carrying out the date checking process must sign and date the log.
- Remove all the pharmacy stock from the area which is to be date checked, and clean thoroughly.
- Check the expiry date of the products. (Take care not to confuse with date of manufacture). See figure 1 for examples of symbols denoting expiry and manufacture.
- If the date of expiry is undeterminable, the product must be removed from stock and disposed of. This includes strips or foils of medication within split or broken packs where the expiry date has been cut off or rendered unreadable. (Note some front of shop products may not have an expiry date: consult with the pharmacist if you are unsure).
- Take care to consider items which expire within a defined time after opening, refer to SOP 29 Appendix 2 Common products with a short shelf life once opened.
- Isolate and remove any dispensary stock with an expiry of less than 31 day's supply.
- Isolate and remove any stock which would expire before it could be fully used if it were dispensed now – for example where the pack is for a quantity for more than a month's supply such as a triple pack.
- Make a record of this stock for stock check purposes and write off the stock on MPS under "expired stock" to ensure accurate live stock levels are maintained.

**Figure 1 Common symbols and pictograms to denote Manufacture and expiry dates**



## 2.3 Disposal of expired stock and process around Falsified Medicines Directive (FMD)

- Dispose of expired and unusable medication in accordance with SOP 20 Sourcing, Storage and Disposal of Medicinal Products.
- Controlled drugs have specialised disposal requirements please refer to SOP 15 Management of Controlled Drugs.

- If the stock is damaged, decommission the stock first before disposal on your MPS FMD software under the “Destroy” option.
- If the stock is out-of-date, you do not need to decommission it as the system will know that the stock is expired; just dispose of it as usual.

## 2.4 Documentation and Record Keeping

- For pharmacy stock which is still in-date, but which will expire within the next 6 months,
  - The details, quantities and batch numbers should be recorded a diary/note book used exclusively for the purpose for expiry date recording.
  - Records should be checked on a monthly basis before the first day of the subsequent month so that any medication due to expire that month can be removed and disposed of. Note: some products may have been dispensed in the interim.
  - These short-dated products should also be conspicuously flagged on the shelf to make them easily identifiable. Flag items by placing a red coloured sticker (available via <https://www.stacked.ie/> on the front of the box (beside drug name) with the expiry date written on it.
  - Expired controlled drugs should be stored in a segregated and clearly labelled manner in the CD safe pending destruction and disposal as per SOP 15 Management of Controlled Drugs.
  - Check each item of stock for damage, defect or contamination and isolate any stock where this is suspected.
  - Complete the date checking log by signing to declare that the pharmacy stock has been date checked for that area.
  - The supervising pharmacist must sign and date the log to confirm they have overseen the date checking process and are satisfied it has been done correctly.
  - These Expiry Date Checking Logs for both Dispensary and Front of Shop must be kept on the pharmacy premises and available for inspection for 2 years from date of last entry.

## 2.5 Final Date check

- It is always the responsibility of the pharmacist checking the prescription to undertake the final date check on all products as per SOP14 Prescription Processing. A date checking procedure is designed to support this and does not negate their responsibility.

## 2.6 Expiry after opening

- The manufacturer’s expiry on a container is the unopened expiry date.
- Certain preparations e.g. all eye drops, and some oral liquids have a shorter shelf life once they have been opened.
- Pharmacists have a responsibility to counsel all patients on the safe storage and disposal of all products, and to supply advice to patients on “in use” expiries of opened, reconstituted and extemporaneous products. Relevant expiry dates should also be highlighted on the medicine label or container upon supply to patients.

## 3 References

Irish Statute Book:

S.I. No. 488/2008 - Regulation of Retail Pharmacy Businesses Regulations 2008: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2008/si/488/made/en/print> (accessed 22/07/19)

NHS Rotherham CCG good practice guidance for Care and Nursing homes on expiry dates of medicines Ratified 26th October 2016; review November 2018 <http://www.rotherhamccg.nhs.uk/Downloads/Top%20Tips%20and%20Therapeutic%20Guidelines/Rotherham%20CCG%20good%20practice%20guidance%20on%20expiry%20dates%20of%20medicines.pdf> ( accessed 22/07/19)

Guidelines on the Counselling and Medicine Therapy Review in the Supply of Prescribed Medicinal Products from a Retail Pharmacy Business :  
Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland Version 3 April 2019

[https://www.thepsi.ie/Libraries/Folder\\_Pharmacy\\_Practice\\_Guidance/01\\_11\\_Guidelines\\_on\\_Counselling\\_and\\_Medicine\\_Therapy\\_Review\\_in\\_the\\_Supply\\_of\\_Prescribed\\_Medicinal\\_Products.sflb.ashx](https://www.thepsi.ie/Libraries/Folder_Pharmacy_Practice_Guidance/01_11_Guidelines_on_Counselling_and_Medicine_Therapy_Review_in_the_Supply_of_Prescribed_Medicinal_Products.sflb.ashx) ( accessed 22/07/19)

## 4 SOP Revision History

Version 2 June 2015, required review, updated to include;

- Returns logged via Uniphar website
- Version 3 March 2017, required review, updated to include;
- Implementation date
- Change to sections on date checking log

Version 4 July 2019: required reformat and review; updated to include;

- Section 1.1: New: Depending on the product, the expiry date may be set as a fixed time e.g. after manufacture, after dispensing or even after opening of the manufacturer's original container.
- Section 1.2: New wording changed from "ensuring patient safety".  
New: "Medical devices "  
New: "Patient counselling around short dated stock"
- Section 1.4: Increased scope to: "medical device and front of shop product"
- Section 2.1: Changed header to "Receiving medicinal and other products into the pharmacy".  
New: Cold chain products may not be returned as per the HPRA.  
New phone number reflecting Uniphar Website
- Section 2.2: New: Note some front of shop products may not have an expiry date: consult with the pharmacist if you are unsure.  
Changed one month to less than 31 day's supply.
- Section 2.3 New: Disposal of expired stock and process around Falsified Medicines Directive (FMD)
- Section 2.4 New: Documentation and Record Keeping
- Section 2.6 New: Expiry after opening

**Appendix 1: Dispensary Date Checking Log V 29.4**

Dispensary Section		Tablets A-F	Tablets G-K	Tablets L-Q	Tablets R-Z	High Tech and EMP	Topical Creams/ Ointment	Liquids	Controlled Drug Cabinet(s)	Fridge (s)	Inhalers, Nasal Sprays, Eye & Ear Drops, Injections	COC & HRT	Food Supplement And Ostomy
Qtr. 1	Pharmacist signature												
	Date												
Qtr. 2	Pharmacist signature												
	Date												
Qtr. 3	Pharmacist signature												
	Date												
Qtr. 4	Pharmacist signature												
	Date												

**Note:** There are 14 sections which must be checked once every 3 months: **SP MPSI signature & date**\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 1: Front of Counter Log**

<b>FOC Section</b> (Complete as required) →													
<b>Qtr. 1</b>	<b>Staff signature</b>												
	<b>Date</b>												
<b>Qtr. 2</b>	<b>Staff signature</b>												
	<b>Date</b>												
<b>Qtr. 3</b>	<b>Staff signature</b>												
	<b>Date</b>												
<b>Qtr. 4</b>	<b>Staff signature</b>												
	<b>Date</b>												

SP MPSI signature & date \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 2: Common products with a short shelf life once opened

- Certain preparations have a shorter shelf life once they have been opened.
- The following product list is not exhaustive and is only intended to cover some of the most frequently used products. **Please add to this or compile your own list for medicines used by your patients.**
- Many unlicensed oral preparations will have a short shelf life once opened.
- It is best practice to write on the container when opening a product: the date the product was opened or the date the product expires.

Product	Expected Shelf Life Once Opened
Tear Lac / Hylo Tear / Hylo Forte eye drops	6 months
Vita-Pos eye ointment 6 months Optive / Systane eye drops	6 months
Nicorandil (each opened blister strip)	30 days
Exputex Liquid:	28 days
Oramorph 10mg/5ml Liquid	90 days
Phenergan Elixir:	One month
Risperdal Liquid 1mg/ml:	3 months
Zantac Liquid	28 days

