



ABSOLUTE SCOOP

DID YOU KNOW?

Some medications have a different expiration date after they're opened. These "beyond-use dates" vary by product—most eye drops, for example, should be discarded 28 days after opening.



MEDICATION STORAGE AND EXPIRATION

Written by Courtney Suggett, PharmD, BCGP | Consultant Pharmacist

At Absolute Pharmacy, we take pride in helping ensure the medications administered to our residents are safe, effective, and properly stored. Proper medication storage and awareness of expiration and beyond-use dates are essential to maintaining medication safety and effectiveness. Taking a few moments to check these details can help protect our residents and ensure medications remain safe to use.

Medication Expiration

The safety and effectiveness of medications cannot be guaranteed after the product expiration date. Many multidose products stored in their original container, such as vitamins, supplements, and liquid medications, may be used up until the expiration date on the package or bottle, however it is important to check each individual package or package insert for specifics. Other multidose products have a beyond use date, which is an expiration date assigned to the product after it is opened or first used.

- A few common beyond use dates are as follows:
 - Most eye drops (unless otherwise noted): 28 days after opening
 - Latanoprost eye drops: 42 days after opening
 - Lantus preparations: 28 days after opening
 - Aplisol (TB testing solution): 30 days after opening

Additionally, any product which becomes damaged or contaminated should be discarded per the facility's medication disposal policy and replaced.

Medication Storage

Medications are stored in three areas of nursing facilities, and these areas should be routinely audited for the following:

Medication Room:

- Door remains locked at all times, with only licensed personnel having access, such as nurses and medication technicians.
- Prescription and OTC items are within an acceptable expiration range, as determined by each facility.
- Ensure Controlled Room Temperature (USP) of 68°F to 77°F is maintained. Brief excursions are acceptable, however extended periods of time out of range can cause breakdown of drugs, which may render medications ineffective or possibly even unsafe.
- Controlled substances must be stored under double lock and in permanently affixed compartments.
- All spaces remain clean, neat, and organized.
- Ensure space is free of discontinued or expired medications. Follow facility policy on return or destruction of such medications.

Continued on next page...

**Medication Refrigerator:**

- Consult the medication package insert or your consultant pharmacist with excursion questions.
- Thermometer is present inside of fridge.
- Temperature is recorded daily on temperature log, and twice daily when vaccines are present.
 - Any temperature outside of acceptable range (36-46 F) must have a corresponding corrective action noted.
- Freezer should not contain ice buildup, defrost if necessary.
- No food or supplements may be stored in the medication fridge.
- Controlled substances must be stored under double lock and in permanently affixed compartments.
- Ensure space is free of discontinued or expired medications. Follow facility policy on destruction of such medications.

Medication and Treatment Carts:

- Ensure carts are locked at all times when nurse or medication tech is not present
- Ensure space is free of discontinued or expired medications. These items must be removed within 10 days of discontinuation. Follow facility policy on destruction of such medications.
- All multidose products are marked with date opened.
- Check each container for specific storage requirements and expiration date, as these may vary between medications and manufacturers.
 - See **Expirations for Common Therapies** reference for products with beyond use dates
- Medications are separated based on administration route.
- Remains organized, clean, and free of liquid or tablet spills.
- Controlled substances must be stored under double lock and in permanently affixed compartments.

How does Absolute Pharmacy help support medication storage and expiration compliance?

Absolute's account managers and consultant pharmacists conduct routine audits of medication carts and refrigerators at the nursing facilities we serve. These audits should be used as an adjunct to a facility's own internal audit practices. Due to the fluidity of medication movement through nursing homes, each facility is ultimately responsible for ensuring all medications are within expiration date and are stored properly.

Medications repacked and dispensed by Absolute Pharmacy contain an expiration date listed on the auxiliary label. Many medications have specific storage instructions, shortened expiration dates, or beyond use dates. Absolute Pharmacy has additional references for short dated medications and medication storage available to assist with beyond use date compliance in your facility. Please reach out to your consultant pharmacist or account manager for more information.

About the Author



Outside of work, Courtney enjoys camping and spending time with her husband, two small children, and their chocolate lab.

Courtney Suggett, PharmD, BCGP is a Clinical Consultant Pharmacist. Courtney is a graduate of Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA. She started her career at Absolute Pharmacy in the spring of 2018, beginning in operations then transitioning into consulting in 2020. She also achieved a board certification in geriatrics in the year 2020. Courtney is passionate about deprescribing medications and helping facilities achieve positive clinical outcomes for their residents.

Why did the skeleton go to the party alone?

He had no body to go with.



Which room are ghosts not allowed to enter?

The living room.