Spotlight Series

Issue 05/2026

Meds on Time - Time Critical Medicines

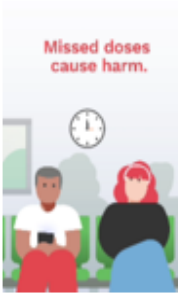
Introduction

The Patient Safety Together Spotlight Series highlights different patient safety initiatives, examples of local shared learning or patient safety content that may impact the wider healthcare audience in Ireland. In this instalment, we shine a spotlight on Time Critical Medicines (TCMs) and the National Medication Safety Programme's Meds on Time webpage, which brings together practical resources to support awareness of time critical medicines among healthcare professionals, patients and carers.

What are Time Critical Medicines?

Taking medicines at the right time is important for safe and effective treatment. For some medicines, taking a dose more than 30 minutes before or after the scheduled time may cause serious problems. These are called time critical medicines. To help remember the main groups of time critical medicines, the mnemonic (a memory aid) PATIENT can be used. Each letter represents a different type of medicine:

- **P** – Parkinson's disease and movement disorder medicines (Symptom control)
- **A** – Anticoagulants (Blood clot or stroke prevention)
- **T** – Transplant immunosuppressants (Anti-rejection medicines after transplant)
- **I** – Insulins (Blood sugar control)
- **E** – Epilepsy medicines (Seizure Control)
- **N** – Narcotics (opioids) (Strong pain relief)
- **T** – Treatment with steroids



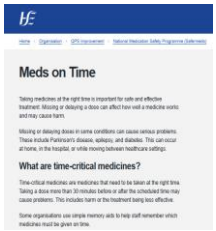
Why do Time Critical Medicines matter?

Even a single delayed or missed dose of Time Critical Medicines can have serious consequences, including symptom deterioration, preventable complications and prolonged hospital stays. For people living with Parkinson's disease, even short delays in receiving medication can affect mobility, swallowing and safety. Similarly, delayed or omitted doses of anti-epileptic medicines may increase the risk of breakthrough seizures and loss of seizure control.

Where can I get further information?

Visit the National Medication Safety Programme's Meds on Time webpage:

https://www2.healthservice.hse.ie/organisation/qps-improvement/national-medication-safety-programme-safermeds/



Cáilíocht Náisiúnta agus Sábháilteacht Othar
Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Cliniciúil
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What resources are available?

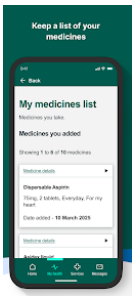
1. HSE Information and Support Resources



The *Meds on Time* webpage brings together a range of resources developed by healthcare organisations, patient groups and medication safety networks.

Patients and families are asked to:

- ✓ Know which medicines are **time critical**.
- ✓ Bring medicines when attending hospital.
- ✓ Bring an up-to-date medicines list, like the My Medicines List or the HSE Health App.
- ✓ Speak up if a medication dose is due, to avoid any delays.



Healthcare professionals should:

- ✓ Know which medicines are time-critical.
- ✓ Ensure systems are in place to identify time-critical medicines in your area.
- ✓ Support timely prescribing, supply and administration.
- ✓ Listen to and act on concerns raised by patients and families.
- ✓ Work together to reduce avoidable harm associated with delayed or missed doses.

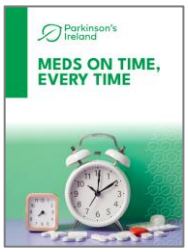
2. Time Critical Medicines Awareness Video



This short awareness video highlights the importance of recognising time critical medicines and responding promptly to patient concerns. It was developed by the Mater University Hospital in collaboration with HSE Spark. It is designed to be shown in waiting rooms and emergency departments.

To view or download the video: https://vimeo.com/1129881620

3. Parkinson's Ireland Resources



Parkinson's Ireland is promoting the Meds on Time, Every Time campaign to promote awareness of the importance of taking Parkinson's medication on time. They have developed a range of practical resources to support people with Parkinson's disease, their families and healthcare professionals. These include an information booklet, medication reminder tools, an alert card and a hospital admission information sheet.

4. Irish Medication Safety Network (IMSN) Resources



The IMSN has a number of practical guidelines to support healthcare professionals in improving the management of time critical medicines. Further information may be found on their website: https://imsn.ie/time-critical/

Interested in the Spotlight Series?

Patient Safety Together: learning, sharing and improving

The Spotlight Series is available on the Patient Safety Together website www.hse.ie/pst

If you would like to discuss a potential Spotlight Series instalment, please contact patientsafetytogether@hse.ie