



STATE OF ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

Donald E. Williamson, MD

State Health Officer

May 24, 2002

POLICY ID# 02-10
CLEARED BY: FBK
DATE: 5/29/02

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Area Health Officers
Area Administrators/Assistant Area Administrators
Area Nursing Directors
Area Home Care Directors
Area Disease Control Managers
Area Home Care Managers
County Clinic Supervisors
County Home Care Supervisors
County Office Managers
Office and Bureau Directors

FROM: Charles C. Thomas, Pharmacy Director
Office of Professional & Support Services

RE: Policy for Packaging Medications
Policy #02-10
(Replaces Policy 97-30)

Attached is the Policy for Packaging Medications (Policy #02-10). This policy replaces Policy #97-30. Section A., # 3., has been added. This information has been added in order to accommodate unit dose packaging.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 334-206-5666 or e-mail me at:
charliethomas@adph.state.al.us.

CT/f
Enclosure

cc: John Williamson
Larry Reese
Bill Stewart
Frances Kenamer
Kathy Vincent
Deborah Thomasson
Jessica Hardy
Dennis Blair
Dr. Charles Woernle
Nancy Keenon
Tom Phillips
Michael O'Cain
Winkler Sims
Laurie Stout
Dr. Jerry Callan
John Ashmore
Debra Thrash

PACKAGING MEDICATIONS

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to standardize the packaging of prescription medications. The policy applies to all drugs dispensed by the Alabama Department of Public Health. Federal law requires that all containers of prescription medications be resistant to light and moisture. They must be dispensed with child-resistant closures unless the patient requests easy-open tops. The Board of Pharmacy is charged with enforcing these laws in each state. These guidelines will assist you in conforming to the law which was established for the public's safety. Each county health department is responsible for ordering vials from the vendor. Vials are on the state bid list.

II. PROCEDURE

- A. All prescriptions or medications must be in a proper container. Amber vials, or the original container of the medication, must be used. If the original bottle does not have a lock top, it must be repackaged with a lock top vial. Vials should be purchased on state bid.

There are two types of vials:

1. Screw lock vials: These are the standard vials that come packaged with a lock top vial and with a supply of easy open top vials. Tops may also be ordered separately if there are not enough of a particular type in the case. The sizes of these vials are 12, 13, 20, and 40 dram vials.
 2. M & M (or reversible cap) vials: These vials have a special top that is a lock top, which when turned over becomes a standard screw top or snap top. These vials are a little more expensive but offer an alternative when a patient has problems with the other tops. Tops come in the case with the vials and can also be ordered separately. Sizes of these vials are 16, 20, and 40 dram.
 3. Unit dose packaging: When it is required by law to package drugs in unit dose packaging (such as Iron preparations) or when unit dose packaging is sent to the health department, it is permissible to dispense those drugs in an envelope or zip lock bag. Place the prescription label on the bag or envelope. It is not necessary to take the drugs out of the unit dose packages and put them into a bottle.
- B. Use of easy open tops: When a patient requests an easy open top, they must sign a release form (ADPH-PH-4/6-97(BS) which is kept with the patient files. These forms need to be signed only once. Medications may be dispensed in easy tops on future visits without obtaining another signature. This has been approved by our legal department. Forms will be stocked in the supply room. (See Policy #97-26).
- C. Existing containers to provide directly-observed therapy may be used. If any of the medication is to be self administered by the patient, the use of amber vials and proper labeling is required.