

**NHS Grampian Guideline For Ordering, Storing And Returning
High Strength Opioids In Hospitals**

Co-ordinators: Controlled Drug Team	Consultation Group: See relevant page in the Guideline	Approver: Accountable Officer, NHS Grampian
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Identifier: MGPG/Guide_CDHighDose/ 1483	Review Date: March 2027 This guideline will be reviewed in three years or sooner if current treatment recommendations change.	Date Approved: March 2024
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Policy Statement:

It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that they are working to the most up to date and relevant guideline, policies, protocols and procedures.

Version 5

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Executive Sign-Off

This document has been endorsed by the Director of Pharmacy and Medicines
Management and Controlled Drug Accountable Officer, NHS Grampian

Signature:  _____

Replaces: NHSG/Guide_CDHighDose/MGPG1064, Version 4

Document application: NHS Grampian Hospitals

Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Changes Made
November 2023	Updated names and links to referenced documents. Updated email. Removed ward and community hospital which has closed since last review.	Page 2 - Locations, references
November 2023	Added Hydromorphone 10mg/1mL and Alfentanil 5mg/1mL. Added Oxycodone 10mg/1mL oral solution and Morphine 20mg/1mL oral solution. Changed title to reflect wider range of opioids.	Page 2 - Definitions of 'High Strength'

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1. Introduction

There have been a number of reports of deaths and harm due to the administration of high strength diamorphine, morphine or oxycodone injections to opioid naive patients. The National Patient Safety Agency previously issued a safer practice notice⁽¹⁾ on this subject.

2. Objectives

This guideline aims to promote the safe ordering, use and storage of high strength opioids whilst ensuring their availability for patients who require them. All wards/departments/dispensaries must follow this guideline when ordering, storing or returning high strength opioids.

3. Definitions of ‘High Strength’

- Diamorphine powder for solution for injection of 30mg or greater is considered high strength.
- Morphine solution for injection of 30mg/mL or greater is considered high strength.
- Oxycodone solution for injection of 50mg/mL is considered high strength.
- Hydromorphone solution for injection of 10mg/1mL is also considered high strength but is only stocked by Roxburghe House. In Roxburghe this is treated as a high strength opioid and placed in a red CD bag when received. This product would normally be used under specialist palliative care advice.
- Alfentanil solution for injection of 5mg/1mL is also considered high strength but is only stocked by Roxburghe House. In Roxburghe this is treated as a high strength opioid and placed in a red CD bag when received. This product would normally be used under specialist palliative care advice.
- Oxycodone 10mg/1mL oral solution is considered high strength but is only stocked by Roxburghe House.
- Morphine 20mg/1mL oral solution is considered high strength but is only stocked by Roxburghe House.

4. Locations

High strength opioids can be held as stock at the following locations:

- Roxburghe House
- Ward 106, ARI
- Ward 112 ARI
- Ward 114, ARI
- Ward 201, ITU, ARI

- Ward 206/207, ARI
- Ward 217, Surgical HDU, ARI
- Ward 309, ARI
- Main Theatre Recovery, ARI
- Theatre, Woodend
- Labour Theatre, AMH
- Theatre, RACH
- HDU, RACH
- Medical/Surgical Ward, RACH
- Dr Gray's, Ward 5
- Theatre, Dr Gray's
- NHS Grampian Hospital Dispensaries

- Community Hospitals Aberdeenshire:
 - Aboyne – General
 - Chalmers - GP Ward (Banff)
 - Fraserburgh - Philorth
 - Glen-O-Dee - Morven
 - Inverurie – Donbank Ward
 - Jubilee – Rothieden (Huntly)
 - Kincardine Community - Arduthie (Stonehaven)
 - Peterhead - Summers
 - Turriff - General

- Community Hospitals Moray:
 - Seafield Hospital - General and Muirton Ward (Buckie)
 - Stephen Hospital (Dufftown)
 - Turner Memorial Hospital (Keith)

Areas not included in the lists above should not routinely stock high strength opioids injections and oral solutions and should only order and hold as determined by individual patient requirements.

5. Ordering of High Strength Opioids during normal working hours

5.1 The name, form, strength and quantity of the drug required **must** be completed in the CD order book in accordance with the NHS Grampian Policy and Procedure for the Safe Management of Controlled Drugs in Hospitals and Clinics⁽²⁾.

5.2 The CD order book should be sent to the Pharmacy Department. Where there is no Pharmacy Department on site the CD order should be scanned and emailed to gram.pharmacyservicedesk@nhs.scot. The ward/department should then phone the Pharmacy Department (01224 (5)53227) to confirm receipt of the scanned order.

5.3 The person placing the order **must** ensure that a sufficient supply of naloxone injection is available on the ward/department. If no naloxone is available, an order **must** be placed at the same time as the order for the high strength opioid, using the usual ordering process.

5.4 The high strength preparation will be supplied from the Pharmacy Department in a plastic sealable, transparent red CD bag. These bags are designed specifically for high strength CDs and state 'Warning: Contains High Dose Opioid'.

6. Out of Hours/Urgent Supplies

Wards/departments (not listed in [Section 4](#)) requiring high strength opioids urgently may request an appropriate quantity from another ward in the hospital. The process detailed in the NHS Grampian Policy and Procedure for the Safe Management of Controlled Drugs in Hospitals and Clinics² for transfer of CDs between wards/departments must be followed.

High dose opioids must only be transported in the original container and must be supplied in a red CD bag.

If the ward/department requires ongoing supplies a CD order should be placed with pharmacy at the earliest opportunity.

7. Storage of High Strength Opioids

7.1 High strength opioids **must** remain in the red CD bag in which they were supplied and be stored in the controlled drug cupboard or in a designated area of the CD cupboard for the storage of high strength preparations only.

7.2 Wards/departments that stock high strength opioids should hold a small supply of red CD bags. Red CD bags can be requested from the Pharmacy Department at ARI.

8. Returning High Strength Opioids When No Longer required

High strength opioids **must** be returned to pharmacy from wards that are not authorised to keep these as stock medicines (as soon as practicable).

8.1 When the patient for whom the high strength opioids was ordered no longer requires the medication, the ward pharmacist or pharmacy technician **must** be notified at the first opportunity within normal pharmacy working hours to arrange return to pharmacy.

8.2 Two registered nurses/midwives/Operating Department Practitioners **or** the ward pharmacist or pharmacy technician together with a registered nurse/midwife/ODP should remove the medication from the CD cupboard on the ward and sign it out from the CD record book in accordance with the NHS Grampian Policy and Procedure For The Safe Management Of Controlled Drugs In Hospitals and Clinics². The drug **must** be returned in the red CD bag, accompanied by a green pharmacy order sheet (ZOP101) detailing the drugs being returned.

Where a pharmacy is present on site, the high dose opioids should be returned to the relevant pharmacy department during working hours. If there is no pharmacy department on site the high dose opioids should be returned to the distribution section of ARI Pharmacy Department in the locked ward blue drug box. Wards and departments should pre-notify distribution if high strength opioids are being returned in the ward blue drug box.

9. Record Keeping

Records **must** be maintained in the CD record book in accordance with the NHS Grampian Policy and Procedure for the Safe Management of Controlled Drugs in Hospitals and Clinics².

References

- 1) [NG46 Controlled drugs: safe use and management full guideline \(nice.org.uk\)](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng46)
- 2) [NHS Grampian Policy AND Procedure For The Safe Management Of Controlled Drugs in Hospitals and Clinics](#)