

Managing medicines in a disaster

When people arrive at an evacuation centre, they have often left their homes in a hurry with little to no personal items, and without medicines, aids or medical equipment. Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) planning should consider the medical and medication needs of vulnerable persons and their transportation to and from suitable accommodation.

Evacuation centre management & staff responsibilities

- Evacuation centre management are not expected to be specialists in caring for people with disabilities but can assist in supporting all affected people if needed.
- LDMGs should plan for storage of dispensed medication where evacuees are unable to store these themselves. A process should be in place for evacuees to notify staff upon arrival.
- Safe to consume food and drinking water must be available for evacuees where food or water is needed for taking medication.
- Queensland Health Public Health Units can be contacted for further advice on medication management if required.

Visiting health professionals' responsibilities

- Visiting health professionals may have some medication on hand for treating evacuees whilst in the evacuation centre. However, health professionals should not store any medication or vaccinations when they are not present.

Medication storage at Evacuation Centres generally

- Some evacuees may need their medication to be stored. These evacuees could include, but are not limited to:
 - those whose medication requires refrigeration
 - the elderly
 - people with disability
 - those who may have limited English.
- The evacuees name must be marked on the medication when stored.
- Make sure all medications are stored as per the label.
- A lockable cupboard or room should be designated for storing non refrigerated medication
 - located in an area that is under the supervision of the evacuation centre management team

- If medication requires refrigeration it should be stored in a designated locked refrigerator, or in a refrigerator in a lockable room alongside other medication. The refrigerator should only be opened when medication is being placed into or taken out of it.
- Where it is not possible to have a designated lockable refrigerator then a lockable container could be used to store medication and then it is placed in a refrigerator.
- Special consideration should be given to how medication storage and management is to occur in the event of an infectious illness outbreak such as gastro to prevent cross-contamination.

Managing medication if stored in an evacuation centre

LDMGs should have a process in place to manage storage of medications for evacuees that are unable to do so on their own. This may include:

- Sighting photo identification where possible or establishing a receipting process to ensure identification is received when the evacuee accesses their medication later.
- Clearly label medication with the evacuee's name and date of birth.
- Keep a medication register listing:
 - all medications stored
 - the owner's name and their date of birth
 - a contact number and/or their location within the evacuation centre.
- Ensure each evacuee understands:
 - where their medication is being stored
 - the need for providing identification when they wish to access medication
 - that it is their responsibility to remember when to take their medication.
- Ensure that the evacuees take their medication with them when they leave the evacuation centre.

Medication administration

- Evacuees are responsible for taking their own medication as per the label or packet/container.
- Where an evacuee needs assistance, their carer can assist them. A carer must be asked by the evacuee to help them take their medication and the carer must only assist the evacuee to take their medication as per the directions on the dispensed medication label or packet/container.
- Where evacuees do not have a carer to assist them, evacuation centre management should organise for a suitable person at the centre to undertake this role—such as a doctor, registered nurse or an adult with first aid training.

Further information

The [Queensland Evacuation Centre Planning Toolkit](#) contains resources for planners to utilise when considering the special needs of evacuees and measures to safely store medication. These resources include but are not limited to:

- Evacuation Centre Site Assessment and Selection Checklist
- Evacuation Centre Site Review Guide
- Evacuation Centre Site Preparation Guide
- Evacuation Centre Resource Planning Tool
- Evacuation Centre Floor Plan Guide.

Other relevant information may be sourced from the following sources:

- Department of Health (for information on ensuring safe drinking water and food safety in an emergency) <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/disaster/evacuation-centres>
- Options for disposal of regulated poisons can be found at <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/systemgovernance/licences/medicines-poisons/poisonsmanagement>
- Contact your doctor, pharmacist, hospital or health clinic
- Call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) at any time
- Contact 13 QGOV (13 74 68) for your nearest public health unit