



The College of Nurses of Ontario presents *Medication Practice Standard: Transcribing Orders, Dispensing and Repackaging*.

## Transcribing Medication Orders

- Basic competency of nurses who administer medications.
- Nurses are accountable for validating the accuracy and completeness.



Transcribing orders is a basic competency of RNs and RPNs who administer medications. Other's may do the actual transcribing paper work, but nurses are accountable for validating the accuracy and completeness of the transcription.

## Transcribing Medication Orders

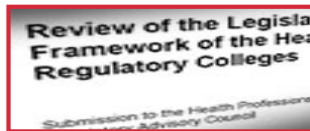
- Consider scheduling and how the medication's absorption and actions are affected by food.
- Nurses should incorporate client choice.
- Electronic order entry systems can reduce the risk of errors.

When transcribing orders, nurses must consider scheduling to ensure medications are given at the same time each day. This will help ensure that doses are spaced appropriately and medication levels are stable. This is especially important if the medication's absorption rate and actions are affected by food intake or if there are contraindicated foods. As well, drug interactions may affect scheduling. Nurses should incorporate client choice and preferences in the scheduling.

Electronic order entry systems allow prescribers to enter orders into a system that automatically transcribes. This can reduce the risk of transcription errors.

## Dispensing and Repackaging Medications

- Before proceeding to the section on dispensing or repackaging of medications, review your practice setting policy and understand applicable legislation.



The focus of the next section of this chapter is dispensing and repackaging medications.

Before dispensing or repackaging medication, you should be familiar with your practice setting's policies regarding these activities, as well as some of the applicable legislation, such as the *Public Hospitals Act*.

## Dispensing versus Repackaging

Dispensing involves the selection, preparation and transfer of prescription drugs, and does not apply to over-the-counter medications.

versus

Repackaging involves taking a previously dispensed medication and transferring it to another container.

After reviewing your facility's policy and applicable legislation, the next step is to determine if you will be dispensing or repackaging the medication.

There is a difference between dispensing and repackaging medications. Dispensing involves the selection, preparation and transfer of prescription drugs, and does not apply to over-the-counter medications. Repackaging involves taking a previously dispensed medication and transferring it to another container while maintaining the labeling system.

## Repackaging

To be considered as repackaging the medication, the original container must be labelled with the:

- drug name;
- drug dose;
- frequency; and
- client's name.



Because dispensed drugs are packaged in blister packages, vials or unit dose containers labelled with the drug name, dose, frequency and the client's name, moving the medication from one labelled container to another is considered repackaging, not dispensing. Repackaging is not a controlled act and can be performed by nurses.

## Dispensing Involves:

- only prescription medications;
- receiving and reading the prescription;
- adjusting an order;
- selecting the drug to dispense;
- reconstituting a product and checking the expiry date; and
- repackaging and labelling.

Dispensing applies to prescription medication only, not to over-the counter drugs.

Dispensing involves: receiving and reading the prescription for a medication; adjusting an order according to approved policy (for example, substituting one drug brand for another); selecting the drug to dispense; reconstituting a product and checking the expiry date; and repackaging and labelling a medication.

## Who Can Dispense Medications?

- Pharmacists/physicians have authority to dispense.
- If dispensing is part of nurse's role, it must be delegated by pharmacists or physicians.
- Nurses should advocate for/follow agency/facility policies about dispensing and accepting delegation.

Dispensing is a controlled act authorized to pharmacists and physicians. Nurses are not authorized to perform this controlled act; however, physicians and pharmacists can delegate the act of dispensing to nurses. Before accepting delegation, the nurse should confirm it is an acceptable practice within their facility.

*Test Your Knowledge of Dispensing and Repackaging Medications*



Following are six examples of situations when a nurse may be required to dispense or repackage medications for a client. Read the example, and then decide whether the example represents the act of dispensing or repackaging by clicking on one of the choices.

Preparing leave-of-absence prescription medication from a drug supply not previously dispensed to the client.

**Is this dispensing or repackaging of medications?**

- A) Dispensing
- B) Repackaging

Use the mouse and click on the circle beside the correct answer.

Filling an envelope from a ward stock supply of a prescription medication for a client to self-administer.

**Is this dispensing or repackaging of medications?**

- A) Dispensing
- B) Repackaging

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Use the mouse and click on the circle beside the correct answer.

Filling a mechanical aid (e.g., a days-of-the-week container) with prescription medications from the client's own blister package.

**Is this dispensing or repackaging of medications?**

A) Dispensing

B) Repackaging

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Use the mouse and click on the circle beside the correct answer.

Providing sample prescription drug packages.

**Is this dispensing or repackaging of medications?**

- A) Dispensing
- B) Repackaging

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Use the mouse and click on the circle beside the correct answer.

Giving a client leave-of-absence medications prepared by pharmacy.

**Is this dispensing or repackaging of medications?**

- A) Dispensing
- B) Repackaging

Use the mouse and click on the circle beside the correct answer.

Giving a client a sample package of an over-the-counter medication.

**Is this dispensing or repackaging of medications?**

A) Dispensing

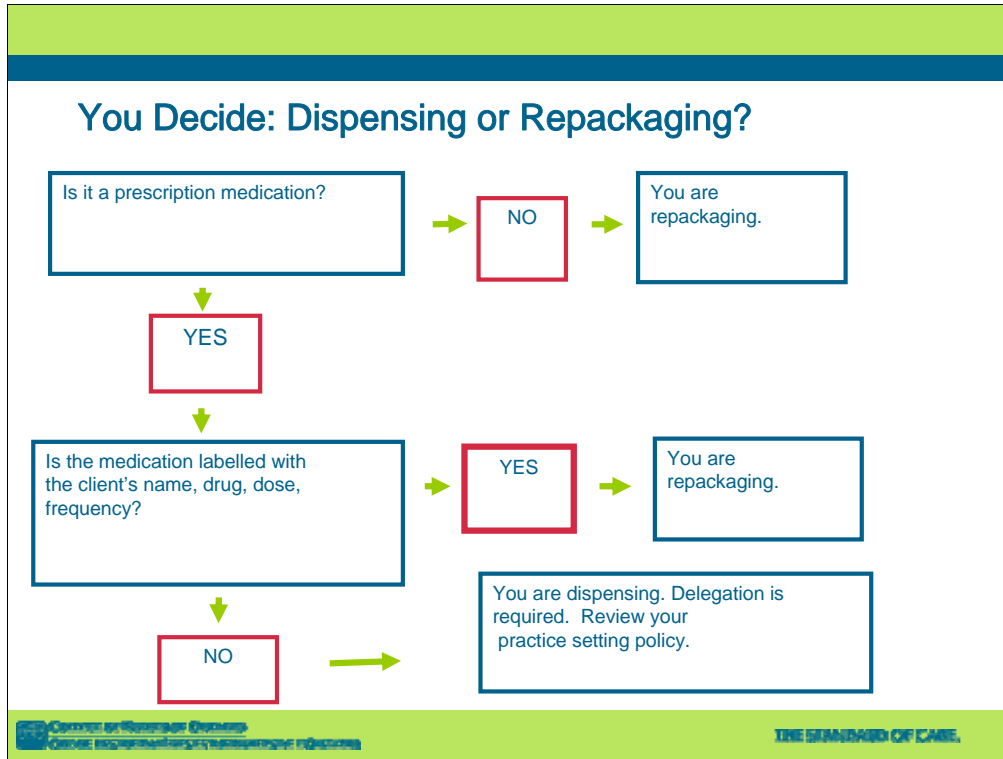
B) Repackaging

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Use the mouse and click on the circle beside the correct answer.

## Dispensing or Repackaging?

Your score	{score}
Max score	{max-score}
Number of quiz attempts	{total-attempts}



Now that you have tested your knowledge, apply your own situation to the knowledge gained. Think of a medication and determine if you are dispensing or repackaging medications by following the algorithm. When you are finished with reviewing the algorithm, push play to continue with the presentation.

## Additional Chapters in this Module

- Prescribing and Communicating Orders
- Dispensing and Repackaging
- Medication Errors
- Medication Administration
- Special Considerations
  - Allergy and Immunizing agents
  - Investigational Medications and Placebos
  - Sedations



Understanding key points when transcribing, dispensing and repackaging medications is an important section in the *Medication* practice standard.

The *Medication* practice standard focuses on other topics and answers other questions such as: Who can prescribe and communicate orders?, What key factors reduce medication errors; and What is a nurse's responsibility when error occurs?

The *Medication* practice standard outlines the nursing role and responsibility when administering medications, including investigation medication and placebos, and allergy, immunizing agents and sedations.

To view a presentation on one of these topics, close the presentation, return to the Learning Centre, and select the chapter of your choice.

To ask a College Practice Consultant a question, click on the word Contact in the top right-hand corner of this screen.