Medication – scheduling administration times

Medication Management
Quick reference guide

Medications will be scheduled for administration based on:

1. the selected first dose priority
   - NOW
   - Routine
2. the frequency
   - scheduled frequency
   - interval frequency

Check the schedule when ordering

1. From the Orders page click +Add.
2. Search for the medication and select the most appropriate order sentence.
3. Click Done to close the search window.

To change the administration time back to 0600 for the life of the order:

4. Select the frequency e.g. weekdays only.
5. Click on the located next to the Frequency box.

A window will open where you can enter the desired time of administration. Once the time of dose has been selected you will be prompted to indicate the first administration date and time.

**Note:** when you click into Frequency the appropriate time/schedule may not be listed e.g. thyroxine is usually administered at 0600 on an empty stomach. When the administration times are changed from daily on an empty stomach to weekdays only the administration time resets to 0800. To obtain a schedule of 0600 on an empty stomach weekdays only, you will need to do the following steps.
7. When you have made your selections click OK and sign the order.

Scheduling Doses

It is critical that clinicians have a detailed understanding of INTERVAL versus SCHEDULED frequencies when prescribing medications. The frequency affects not only the first dose date and time, but also the subsequent doses.

It is essential that all prescribers review the schedule of every medication before prescribing.

Interval frequencies are hourly frequencies, such as:
- 4 hourly
- 6 hourly
- 8 hourly

Scheduled frequencies are frequencies such as:
- TWICE a day
- THREE times a day
- FOUR times a day

Scheduled frequencies have specific times within the order. For example, a medication ordered FOUR times a day (even interval) will have scheduled frequencies of 0600hr, 1200hr, 1800hr and 2400hr and one with a scheduled frequency of FOUR times a day will have scheduled frequencies of 0600hr, 1200hr, 1800hr and 2200hr.

Impact of First Dose Priority on scheduling

First Dose Priority of NOW will schedule the first dose date/time immediately (current date/time).

First Dose Priority of Routine will schedule the first dose for:
- Start of the next hour if the order uses an interval frequency (e.g. 6 hourly).
- Next time in the schedule for scheduled frequencies (e.g. FOUR times a day).

If a medication with scheduled frequencies has a first dose priority of NOW, there is a clinical risk that a patient may receive two doses of a medication close together.

**IMPORTANT:** Check that the next dose is not too close to the first dose when First Dose Priority is NOW.

Intravenous Antibiotics

When prescribing IV antibiotics, use hourly (known as interval) frequencies (e.g. 6 hourly), rather than scheduled frequencies (e.g. FOUR times a day). This will reduce the risk of additional, unintended doses being scheduled and the nurses having to do extensive rescheduling.

Antibiotics generally have order sentences with a first dose priority of NOW. So if a scheduled frequency is used, the first and second doses may be scheduled too close together, because the first dose occurs NOW and the next dose will fall at the scheduled time NOT 6 hours after the first dose. (Scheduled doses are for set times of the day.)

Example: Try to select order sentences with 6 hourly frequencies. If not available you may select the FOUR times a day (even interval) order sentence and make modifications as per following steps.
- change the frequency to 6 hourly
- review appropriateness of the first dose priority. (NOW/Routine)
- always check the administration schedule by clicking in to the “First Dose Date/Time” field to review the administration times
- Finally, after signing the order, check the MAR.

If in doubt, call 1999 and ask for a pharmacist or a clinical floor walker to come and assist you.