



Summary of In-use Shelf Lives

- Check the product’s summary of product characteristics (SPC) (www.medicines.org.uk) before deciding on the expiry date.
 - If the manufacturer’s expiry date is shorter than the guidance below - use the manufacturers expiry date
 - If the manufacturer specifies an in-use shelf life for their product – use the manufacturers shelf life information instead of the guidance below
- Where the product is an unlicensed ‘special’ the manufacturer or the supplying pharmacy should be able to provide expiry date information.
- Record the date product opened/reconstituted and the calculated expiry on the medicine package/label.
- All medicines should be stored as per the manufacturer’s instructions in a clean, cool and dry location out of the reach of children.
- Any product whose appearance suggests it may be unfit for use should be discarded.
- Due to infection control, emollients should not be shared between patients.

The following expiry dates are for guidance only.

Formulation	Suggested expiry
Tablets and capsules	
Blister Packed	Manufacturer's expiry
Bulk Packs	One year from date of opening
Exceptions: Products susceptible to atmospheric moisture, GTN	
Liquids	
Licensed preserved internal and external	Six months
Unlicensed product (or special) made for individual patient	Manufacturer’s expiry or pharmacy label
Powders to be reconstituted e.g. antibiotic liquids	As per pharmacy label or manufacturer label
Creams	
Packed in pump dispensers	Manufacturer’s expiry
Packed in Tubes	Three months
Packed in Jars/Pots	One month
Unlicensed product (or special) made for individual patient	Manufacturer’s expiry or pharmacy label
Ointments	
Packed in Tubes	Six months
Packed in Jars/Pots	Three months
Unlicensed product (or special) made for individual patient	Manufacturer’s expiry or pharmacy label
Ear/Eye/Nose Drops and Eye Ointments	
Licensed preserved ear/eye/nose drops and eye ointments	Refer to Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) – most preparations are 28 days – some are up to 6

	months
Licensed preservative-free eye drops	Refer to Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) . Most are single use containers
Unlicensed product (or special) made for individual patient	Manufacturer's expiry or pharmacy label
Inhalers	Refer to Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) .
Insulin	Refer to Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) Usually four weeks once opened - temperature requirements may apply.

References:

- R. Lowe and R. Shaw. Storage, stability and in-use shelf-life guidelines for non-sterile medicines. NHS London, Eastern and South East. 03/2001. <http://www.nhsppu.uea.ac.uk/quality-assurance/documents/>
- NHS Choices. Why do medicines have expiry dates? 21/1/2015 <http://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/why-medicines-have-expiry-dates.aspx?CategoryID=73&SubCategoryID=108>
- S.Bilal, Good Practice Guidance 4: Expiry Dates for Medication, NHS Berkshire East, Dec 2012 http://www.windsorascotmaidenheadccg.nhs.uk/download/care_home_guidance/04.%20Good%20Practice%20Guidance%204.%20Expiry%20dates%20for%20medication.pdf