



Rx Update

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DRUG EXPIRATION DATING

Understanding medication expiration dates is an important part of patient care. Expiration dates may relate to loss of potency and/or sterility. As medications age, the potency decreases. In the case of sterile drugs, seals may deteriorate, allowing bacteria to enter. Once a product is used, **it is important to mark the new expiration date on the container for medications that do not receive the manufacturer's expiration date**, so that it can be discarded if it is not used before its maximum time use period. Expiration dates are expressed on the label or auxiliary label as "Discard contents after mm/dd/yy". **The date opened should not be used to document expiration dates on products.** The expiration date of products prepared in pharmacy is as noted on the container.

It is important to use good aseptic technique when accessing multiple-dose vials. Products should be carefully inspected before use for turbidity, leaks, cracks, and evidence of particulate matter. Products with obvious signs of contamination such as cloudiness or discoloration must not be used. Products must not be used if there is a break in aseptic technique or if contaminated during preparation.

Before administering a medication, it is important to always double check the expiration date and discard the product if the expiration date has been reached. This will help ensure that the patient receives safe and appropriate drug therapy. Drug products should not be used beyond a period of time consistent with drug stability and sterility once the container or package is opened or used. The following table summarizes UIHC policy for assigning expiration dates to drug doses prepared on patient care units.

Assignment of Expiration Dates to Drugs Used on Patient Care Units

Medication Product Category	Expiration Date/ Maximum Time Period for Use
Products for parenteral administration prepared/compounded on PCU (e.g., syringe)	Use immediately
IV solutions prepared/compounded on PCU (e.g., IV bag)	24 hours
Intravenous fat emulsion	24 hours
• Manufacturer's bottle	12 hours
• Syringe	24 hours
Sterile irrigating and topical solutions	24 hours
Ampuls	Use immediately, discard excess
Single-dose vials & syringes	Use immediately, discard excess
Multiple-dose vials (containing a bacteriostatic preservative*)	28 days after opening
Multiple dose vials of designated vaccines (see policy for complete list)	Manufacturer's expiration date
Unit dose oral solids, liquids, and suppositories in manufacturer's original packaging	Manufacturer's expiration date
Floorstock containers of oral solids and oral liquids in bulk bottles	Manufacturer's expiration date
Floorstock topical medications such as ointments, ophthalmics, etc.	28 days after opening
Patient-specific bulk containers of oral liquids, ophthalmics, topicals, etc.	Manufacturer's expiration date
Floorstock topical antiseptic liquids (e.g., hydrogen peroxide, povidone-iodine solution)	Manufacturer's expiration date

* Bacteriostatic preservatives include phenol, chlorobutanol, benzyl alcohol, and methylparaben/propylparaben combinations.

No assumptions about expiration dating should be made for medications. If there is a question about the stability of a product, contact the Pharmacy satellite that serves your area or the Drug Information Center at 6-2600. Products should be used immediately if there is a lack of documentation of extended stability. The complete drug expiration dating policy may be accessed via the UIHC Formulary and Handbook (www.healthcare.uiowa.edu/pharmacy/formulary/Hand/drugexpirationdates.html).