

General Cleanliness and contamination prevention whilst medicating

These guidelines are used by Helios pharmacy but are also applicable to working with remedies in the practise room.

Practicalities

1. Working in a dispensary presupposes that you are bodily clean and don't present an unwashed body odour. Hair should be washed regularly.
2. Please do not wear perfume while dispensing as the fragrance tends to be pervasive and may affect the remedies.
3. Please do not chew gum as this is also usually aromatic.
4. Dispensary coats should be worn in the dispensary when medicating, and should be regularly washed.
5. Please do not consume food or drink in the dispensary. Water is fine but without aromatic additives.
6. When you return from lunch or tea break and you have consumed food, please wash your hands before returning to your work desk.
7. If anything has spilled onto a work desk, counter or floor, please clean it promptly.
8. Hair, dust and dirt finds its way into open pots and containers at the work desk. These should be kept covered when not in use and periodically cleaned with alcohol. If you are refilling a plastic jar with stoppers, powders, etc. please clean it before refilling.
9. Tablet/Bottle Drawers should never be left open for long and certainly not while medicating. They should be tidied and wiped clean before refilling with bottles and tablets. Any spilled pillules or tablets should be cleared out. (This job might best be done by dispensary juniors whose job includes replenishing drawers and medicating stocks in general.)
10. If your work involves repeatedly bending over open preparations such as cream jars, you will need to wear a hair net.
11. Long hair should be tied or worn in a bun.
12. Bottles, vials of alcohol, powders, etc. that have been abandoned at work desks and are not claimed by anyone should be disposed of. (This is wastage and is another reason why each person should leave their desk tidy.)
13. Dispenser tablet/pillule/granule bottles should be capped when not in use and before leaving the work desk.
14. Utensils that are used in the preparation of creams, ointments and other preparations should be cleaned with alcohol both before and after use and stored in a clean repository. (We may need to consider investment in a laboratory instrument sterilizer or similar for storage.)

15. Trays of bottles should never be left open and exposed to dust. Once the plastic covering has been cut, the bottles should be removed and capped or the covering taped shut again if only partially used.

16. When plastic-wrapped flats of tincture bottles are placed in drawers they should be placed so that the mouths of the bottles are on the bottom and the plastic wrap then cut on the topside. This should minimize the tendency for dust to enter into the bottle.

17. Cream jars should be capped immediately after opening the original package. Even then each jar should be visually inspected before filling with cream or ointment.

18. Original delivery boxes of caps, bottles, dropper inserts, etc. should never be left open or with their inner plastic bags left open. (Even the box produces dust.) Re-usable tie-wraps or rubber bands should be used to seal the bags once portions of caps, etc. are removed.

19. When remedy boxes are taken from the shelf and are found to be dusty, wipe them off while turned away from the work counter. (General cleaning and dusting arrangements are being reviewed.)

Remedy Purity

1. Washing hands. If a medicator's hand does become wetted from potentised alcohol, s/he should promptly wash their hands with tap water. It might also be worth considering installing a dry air hand dryer near the sink as repeated use of the single towel can also cause contamination of various sorts.

2. Always regard every work surface, LM tray, board of holes and any other item which in the course of time has been in contact with potentised alcohol to be permanently contaminated. To what degree any surface of whatever texture or hardness can retain potency is controversial and it is unclear whether wiping with alcohol will make much difference where any such retained potency is concerned. Wiping a surface dry with clean alcohol should, however, remove the potentised liquid and help disperse potentised vapours.

- periodically wipe work surfaces with clean alcohol and wipe dry. If any medicated alcohol lands on a surface, wipe it dry.

- whenever you need to medicate on a work surface or to place a medicated substance on a surface (e.g. LMs, powders), place a folded kitchen towel onto the surface first as an insulating layer.

- never place a stopper onto a work surface. New ones should be kept in the plastic jars designated for them. If for some reason you need to place one onto a surface, use a folded paper towel.

- never place a dropper insert on a work surface.

- if you need to place a bottle cap on a surface, place it thread-side up.

- never place a pipette onto a work surface.

- when removing an alcohol plunger dispenser, such as when an alcohol 5 litre bottle is empty, rest it so that the extending glass tube does not come near a work surface. Use paper towelling if necessary.

- never let a teat dropper come into contact with a work surface. These can be rested bulb-first in the board of holes to prevent contamination.

4. Contamination can come about through contact or close proximity between potency vessels and dispensing vessels. The dispensing vessels must never come into direct contact with potency vessels. (By “potency vessel” is meant any vessel containing potentised substance. “Dispensing vessel” in the sense meant here is any vessel which contains pure unpotentised media. This includes our dispensing alcohol bottles and pumps, purified water bottles [plastic and glass], bottles of unmedicated tablets or granules, and designated cylindrical measures.)

Similarly one potency vessel must never come into contact with another potency vessel which contains a different remedy. (Ideally different potencies of the same remedy should not come into contact but our current potency box design makes it difficult to get around this.)

- when making a preparation where you have to dispense from a dispensing vessel into a potency vessel, dispense first into an intermediate clean vial or bottle and from there into the potency vessel. Examples of this are: when making a liquid 4C and you need to add 3 mls of alcohol (which you’ve measured into a cylindrical measure) to 3 mls of water with dissolved 3C in it; adding alcohol to 3C powder to make a 3C suspension.

- when making a combination remedy use intermediate vials for each component remedy and then combine these to avoid back-contamination of the initial component remedies. A detailed description of this procedure has been issued to all dispensary staff and should be added to your Procedures Manual.

- when medicating soft tablets, the action of pouring the tablets into a pre-medicated bottle exposes the tablets in the dispensing bottle to vapours being displaced out of the medicated bottle as it is being filled with tablets. This is a high contamination risk procedure and needs to be done with caution. Please ensure that the dispensing bottle is separated from medicated bottle while pouring and also that your fingers do not come into contact with the top of the medicated bottle’s neck. If the latter contact does occur, please wash your hands before starting the next remedy.

- similar consideration applies to the medicating of granules and other media where you need to pour into a medicated vessel.

5. Never have more than one remedy box open at a time at your work desk. Also please don’t have more than one potency in a box open at a time.