

FAQ

Signing for Medication Administration – When and How?

There have been many queries regarding the appropriate or acceptable time to sign for a medication being administered by a registered nurse (RN). According to the [Standards for Medication Management](#), RNs are expected to “document in accordance with legislation, standards, regulatory requirements, and employer policy”.

The Nurses Association of New Brunswick (NANB) expects a RN to document in the client’s record, any medication that they administered, during or immediately after the administration. An example of signing for a medication “during administration” is intravenous (IV) drug administration. The RN may sign for the IV drug once it is successfully hung and infusing into the client instead of waiting until the IV bag is empty before signing. Such practice would be considered signing during the administration of the medication.

RNs are also expected to practice according to the *Standards for Documentation* and employer policies. The [Standards for Documentation](#) outline practice expectations with the following guidance:

- RNs should only co-sign when there is supporting employer policy (e.g. independent double check of medication preparation, agreement on calculated dosage).
- RNs are expected to complete documentation in a timely manner - during, or as soon as possible after, the care or event.
- RNs must provide a signature and professional designation (RN, GN, NP or GNP) with all documentation; the use of initials is acceptable when a master list of signatures/initials is incorporated into the documentation tool or health record.
- RNs are to never delete, alter or modify anyone else’s documentation.
- RNs only use abbreviations and symbols when each has a distinct interpretation and that each is approved by the employer.

Signing for a medication before it is administered is not meeting the standards set out by the NANB and therefore not acceptable practice. RNs are required to meet their regulatory standards and employer policies; hence, employers are expected to have clear guidance to support medication administration and documentation practices.

For further guidance please refer to the following resources:

[FAQ – Nursing Documentation](#) (NANB)

[Medication Errors](#) (Canadian Nurses Protective Society)