

Medicine measures —

Part 6: Specification for free-standing plastics medicine measuring spoons of 5 mL capacity

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Committees responsible for this British Standard

The preparation of this British Standard was entrusted by the Health Care Standards Committee (HCC/-) to Technical Committee HCC/20, upon which the following bodies were represented:

- Association of National Health Service Supplies Officers
- Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
- British Medical Association
- British Surgical Trades Association Incorporated
- Department of Health and Social Security
- Glass Manufacturers' Federation
- Guild of Hospital Pharmacists
- Medical Sterile Products Association
- National Pharmaceutical Association
- Paediatric Pharmacists Group
- Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee
- Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
- Proprietary Association of Great Britain
- Royal Society of Medicine
- Scottish Pharmaceutical Federation

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Foreword

This revision of BS 3221-6 has been prepared under the direction of the Health Care Standards Committee. BS 3221-6 was first published in 1983 at the request of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, responding to the need for a more robust spoon that would be easier to manipulate.

This revision of BS 3221-6, in addition to superseding the 1983 edition (which is now withdrawn), also supersedes BS 3221-4:1969 which, after running concurrently with the 1983 edition of BS 3221-6, was withdrawn in May 1986.

BS 3221-4, dealing with plastics medicine measuring spoons of 5 mL capacity, was first published in 1966 in order to meet the need for a simple device, mainly for domestic use, which would measure and deliver all liquid medicines in a standard metric dose. The provision of the 5 mL spoon was an essential element in the changeover to the metric system in the dispensing and supply of medicine, which took effect in March 1969. BS 3221-4 was revised in 1969 primarily to give an improved method of test for the capacity of the spoon and to provide additional details for dimensional requirements.

BS 3221-6:1983 retained the basic design of the bowl of the spoon specified in BS 3221-4:1969, together with a number of the requirements and test methods, but differed in several major respects. The handle was redesigned in order to make handling and filling of the spoon easier, to reduce the risk of spillage, to provide a more positive grip for the user and to maintain the filled spoon in a level state when it was set down on a flat surface. For reasons of hygiene, the design of the spoon specified in BS 3221-4 precluded it being set down on a flat surface when filled. The view of the Technical Committee that prepared BS 3221-6:1983 was that the risks arising from setting down a filled spoon were outweighed by the advantages of a free-standing spoon in terms of reduced spillage and consequent increased accuracy of dosage, especially when medicines were administered to young or uncooperative children, or by adults of reduced manual dexterity or coordination. Test methods and requirements for rigidity, impact resistance, resistance to breakage and resistance to hot water were also introduced. It was not found practicable to specify requirements or tests for the biological safety of the materials of which the spoon was made, neither were tests given for resistance to staining by commonly used pharmaceutical colourants nor for resistance to detergent and disinfectant solutions. Appendix A, however, gave guidance for the selection of materials for the manufacture of spoons.

This revision of BS 3221-6 differs from the 1983 edition in the following ways. The fluid used in measuring the capacity of the spoon has been changed from water to a sucrose solution because the latter gives more reproducible test results and is more representative of the fluids with which the spoon is typically used in practice. The tolerances on some of the bowl dimensions have been widened slightly in order to facilitate achievement of the specified volumetric accuracy, and graduation marks on the bowl are actively proscribed. The marking requirements have been amended in order to provide for abbreviated markings on the spoon, and the inclusion of the date of the standard is now optional.

Other current Parts of this British Standard are:

- *Part 1: Specification for medicine measures of 50 mL total graduated capacity;*
- *Part 7: Specification for oral syringes delivering doses of less than 5 mL.*