

The Myton Hospices

Syringe Drivers



What is a syringe driver?

A syringe driver is a lightweight battery operated pump with a syringe containing medication which is used to treat a person's symptoms i.e. pain/nausea. The pump allows the medication to be delivered at a regular rate over 24 hours. It is small enough to be carried around in a bag, attached to a belt or in a clothing pocket and so doesn't hinder usual daily activities. It is recommended that a syringe driver is kept in a 'lock box' (locked box) which is a hard plastic container designed for this purpose with its own key lock.

Why are syringe drivers used?

- Sometimes people may find it difficult to swallow their medication in tablet or syrup form
- Sometimes people may feel sick or vomit frequently so the medication doesn't stay in their stomach long enough to work
- Sometimes a person's symptoms are difficult to control by tablets alone and a syringe driver may be used as well
- Instead of having repeated injections of a medication to treat any symptoms, a syringe driver can provide a more comfortable way to help gain control of symptoms by delivering a constant level of medication

The medication will be prescribed by a doctor or nurse prescriber

Before using your syringe driver

If you or your relative is thought likely to benefit from using a syringe driver, the nurses and doctors will explain the reasons why a syringe driver has been suggested. The nurse will explain how the syringe driver works and can answer any questions you or your relative may have about it.

Using a syringe driver

The syringe in the syringe driver is attached to a thin piece of tubing attached at the other end. The nurse will insert a needle just under the skin, remove the needle and leave a small soft tube in your;

- Chest
- Tummy
- Top of your arm or leg
- Back, such as over the shoulder blade

and will secure the tubing in place with a clear dressing. Once the tubing is in place, you should not feel this and this can stay in place for a number of days.

The correct dose of medication is calculated based on what has been required previously and additional injections can be given if symptoms break through and the dosages in the syringe driver will be adjusted accordingly

When the nurse checks the syringe driver they will:

- Check that your medication is working properly
- Check that the entry site is not painful, leaking, red or swollen
- Replace the tubing in a different part of the body every few days

If you are at all worried that the syringe driver is not working tell a nurse immediately. If you are at home see contact details at the back of the leaflet.

How long will I need the syringe driver for?

You may only need to use a syringe driver for a few days or weeks. The nurse looking after you will give you more details about the amount of time you may need it for.

DO:

- Report any soreness, redness or swelling at the entry site to your nurse
- Contact the nurse if the tubing accidentally comes out
- Contact your nurse or doctor if you have any concerns regarding your syringe driver or medication
- Keep the syringe contents out of direct sunlight and do not allow the syringe driver to become too warm
- Take care when walking around with the syringe driver, use the holster provided or put the syringe driver in your pocket
- Please ask your nurse for advice on the best place to keep your driver
- Always keep all drugs away from children preferably in a locked cupboard

DO NOT:

- Immerse the syringe driver in water; you can have a bath or shower but try to keep the entry site dry and keep the syringe driver out of the water by putting it on a stool by the bath or shower
- Do not attempt to change the settings
- Place the syringe driver above the height of the entry point

Things to report to your nurse

If the syringe driver is accidentally dropped, immersed in water or contaminated by fluids in any way, contact your nurse immediately as she/he will need to bring you a new syringe driver and return the other for inspection.

What to do with the syringe driver whilst you are sleeping

Some people find it useful to tuck the syringe driver under their pillow at night to stop it from falling out of bed.

Alarms on the syringe driver to be aware of

There is an alarm on the syringe driver that will beep if there is a problem. The alarm usually sounds for one of two reasons;

1. There is a blockage to the flow of medication caused by a kink in the long tubing
2. The syringe driver is empty or needs replenishing soon

If the alarm sounds contact your nurse, but if you know a nurse is due to attend to replenish or change the syringe driver, don't worry as the effect of the medication will continue for a while.

How to return the syringe driver when it is no longer needed

Please contact your nurse who will come to collect it from you.

If you have any questions or concerns about your syringe driver please talk to your doctor or nurse.

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