

Patient information leaflet: Syringe Pump

What is a syringe pump?

A syringe pump is a small, portable battery-controlled pump designed to administer your medications slowly over a 24-hour period. The medication is given via thin tubing attached to a small tube placed in the fatty layer beneath your skin in your tummy, upper arm or leg. Using the pump allows the medications to be absorbed into the bloodstream throughout the day.

What does a syringe pump look like?

The syringe pump is a lightweight, compact device measuring around 15cm long and 5cm tall. A pre-filled syringe is placed into the pump, and a clear, lockable plastic cover secures the medication while allowing easy visual inspection.



Why do I need a syringe pump?

There are many reasons why you may have been given a syringe pump:

- You have been vomiting (sick)
- You may have problems swallowing tablets
- You may be sleeping for most of the day so unable to take medicines
- There are difficulties managing your symptoms with tablets alone.
- A syringe pump is often used when someone is dying. It is used to keep the person comfortable and to relieve distress. It **does not** make death happen sooner.

The pump allows you to continue receiving medications without swallowing tablets or having several injections every day. Multiple medications can often be combined in one pump.

What symptoms can be helped using the syringe pump?

- **Pain** – ongoing pain that is not well controlled with tablets or to replace your normal pain killers if you are unable to swallow them
- **Feeling sick or vomiting**

- **Seizures** – when seizure medications cannot be taken by mouth
- **Spasms or colicky abdominal pain**
- A syringe pump is often used when someone is dying as they are **less able to swallow oral medications**. It is used to keep the person comfortable and to relieve distress. It does not make death happen sooner

What are the advantages of the syringe pump?

The syringe pump can give several medications at the same time. It delivers them at a steady rate, which helps keep your symptoms as well controlled as possible. It is portable and can be carried around in your hand or a bag and can be placed next to you on the bed. The syringe pump can be used in hospital, at home or in any other healthcare setting.

How often will my syringe pump be checked?

- **In hospital:** your syringe pump will be checked regularly by the nursing staff
- **At home:** a nurse will visit every day to:
 - Check the pump is working properly
 - Check the needle and change it if needed
 - Replace the medication in the syringe

Your medications and doses will be reviewed each day and changed if needed; wherever you are receiving care.

How do I know if my syringe pump is working?

There is a light above the ON/OFF button:

- **Flashing green** (about once a minute): The pump is working normally
- **Flashing red:** There may be a problem – contact your nurse as soon as possible

How should I take care of my syringe pump?

- Keep the pump dry at all times
- Take care when showering
- Keep the needle insertion site clean and dry
- Keep the pump out of direct sunlight
- Keep away from heat sources such as hot water bottles, as heat may cause it to stop working

When should I contact a nurse?

Contact a nurse immediately if:

- The light flashes red or the alarm sounds
- The pump gets wet
- You drop the pump
- The medication in the syringe change colour or becomes cloudy
- The skin around the needle site becomes red, sore or swollen
- The needle site leaks or the needle falls out
- The tubing becomes disconnected

Who should I contact?

- **In hospital:** call your nurse immediately

- **At home:** contact your community nurse or the out-of-hours service as soon as possible

Sources of information

- Hospital Supportive and Palliative Care Team email: esht.palliativecare@nhs.net
- St Wilfrid's Hospice
- St Michael's Hospice

Important information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4784 or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

The trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 0300 131 4434 Email: esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
Supportive and Palliative Care Team

The Clinical Specialty/Unit that have agreed this patient information leaflet:
Enter name here, if appropriate

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Responsible clinician/author: Jayne Winter, Lead Nurse Supportive and Palliative Care

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