

Injections and Syringe Drivers

For people with palliative care needs to remain at home and have good quality of life, carers will often be involved in assisting in medications management. Understanding why medications are delivered in different ways can be helpful.

How medications are given

Medications can be administered in many different ways, for example:

- Into the mouth or orally in the form of a tablet, capsule, liquid or puffer
- Some can be dissolved under the tongue.
- Into the rectum or vagina in the form of a suppository or cream. If someone feels ill or is vomiting, this is an alternative way medication can be administered and help.
- Into the ear or eye in the form of drops or creams to help with dryness or infections
- On the skin in the form of a patch
- Injections under the skin or into the muscle via a needle.

Injections

Sometimes medications are administered into the muscle or under the skin using a needle.

Medications given into the muscle are given by a once off injection.

Medications given under the skin or sub-cutaneously are given through a small tube or cannula that will be left in place, secured with a dressing and changed regularly.

Medications given under the skin can be given as required in what is known as a single bolus, or they can be given slowly over time using a syringe driver.

Syringe drivers

A person is having difficulties taking oral medications may receive them under the skin using a syringe driver, which is a small, portable, battery operated device. A syringe driver is used to slowly administer a continuous dose of medication in a less invasive way.

Using a syringe driver can make administering medications easier, as it removes the need for repeated doses of medication. They are usually effective in managing common symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, pain, difficulty breathing and excessive secretions.

The health care team will provide you with training on how to use a syringe driver.



This training may also include how to use a syringe and needle to prepare the medicine and then how to put the syringe into the driver.

There are a few things you will need to keep in mind when using a syringe driver and they include:

- Checking the battery life
- Checking the tubing is not kinked
- Checking the small tube under the skin is still in place, particularly if the person you are caring for becomes agitated
- Observing to see if the medication is covering the needs of the person you are caring for. Sometimes a 'top up' of additional medication might be required.

If you have any questions about medications, how they are given or the use of a syringe driver, please ask the health care team.

Some carers find it stressful to manage medications. It is important to talk to the health care team if you are uncomfortable giving medications or using a syringe driver.

CarerHelp is here when you need it.
www.carerhelp.com.au

