

Anticipatory medicines - a guide for patients and family members

What are anticipatory medicines?

Anticipatory medicines, sometimes called “just in case” medicines, are injectable medicines prescribed for you, which are kept in your house to reduce delays in getting treatment for pain and other symptoms if needed urgently. They may not be needed straight away or for a few days or weeks, but they may be needed if you suddenly find it difficult to swallow your medicines in tablet or liquid form, or because you are vomiting frequently. Some people never experience these symptoms. This leaflet aims to provide information about these medicines for both you and your loved ones.

If you have been given a prescription for these medicines, please take this to a pharmacy as soon as possible, so the medicines are available when needed. Sometimes it can be difficult to get hold of these medicines, especially at night or at weekends when pharmacies are often closed. It will be useful to have them available in your home so that they can be used by a nurse or doctor if needed and reduce the pressures of trying to get hold of them at the last minute. For a list of pharmacies that have these medicines, please [visit our website](#) or scan the QR code shown here.



If you are discharged from a hospital or hospice, you may have been provided with a supply of these medicines.

What kind of medicines will I receive?

The medicines are usually given by injection by a doctor or nurse when you need them. You may not need any of these medicines right now, however they have been issued for you as your healthcare team think they might be helpful in the future.

Your doctor or community nurse may leave a written plan in your home which describes your care along with a document to record the plan for the use of your anticipatory medications and any other medicines you are receiving.

The type of anticipatory medicines given will vary from person to person and will be tailored to your specific situation. The medication names you might see include:

- Pain: Morphine or Oxycodone.
- Nausea or vomiting: Haloperidol or Levomepromazine.
- Shortness of breath: Morphine or Oxycodone.
- Mucus in the throat: Glycopyrronium or Hyoscine Butylbromide (Buscopan).
- Restlessness or agitation: Midazolam, Levomepromazine or Lorazepam tablets.

If you have been given Lorazepam tablets, please see the separate leaflet for further information.

Who should give me anticipatory medicines?

The anticipatory medicines should only be given to you by a registered healthcare professional, such as a community nurse or doctor. If you have symptoms that require these medications, please phone your GP, or community nurse if you have one, on the numbers written below to see if you need an injection.

The visiting healthcare professional will agree a plan with you about what to do if your usual medicines need to be changed or another dose of the anticipatory medicines is needed.

How do I look after my anticipatory medicines?

The medicines are prescribed for you: they must not be used for anyone else. They should be stored in your home, out of sight and reach of children, vulnerable adults and pets. If you have any concerns regarding people accessing your medicines, please discuss this with your GP or community nurse, so security measures can be put in place. They do not need to be kept in a fridge, but ideally should be kept in a dark, cool place at normal room temperature (lower than 25°C). It is a good idea to check your medicines every few weeks to make sure they have not expired.

It is important to let your healthcare team and/or your family know where the medicines are kept. When you have the medicines in your home, your community nurse may regularly visit to check and record them. The nurses will also ask how you are feeling in yourself and answer any questions you may have on the medicines.

If any of the medicines have expired, are used, or if you had to contact an out of hours service for medicines, please contact your GP so they can be replaced. The amount supplied from your first prescription should last long enough to allow time for you to obtain further supplies from your GP if needed. If your condition changes, please contact your GP so that they can re-assess you and review your medications.

If you are admitted to a care home, hospital or hospice, please take your anticipatory medicines with you. If you leave them at home, please let your new care team know.

If the anticipatory medicines are no longer required, please return them to a community pharmacy or a dispensing GP practice to be destroyed.

If you have any questions about your anticipatory or usual medicines, please talk to your GP, community nurse or community pharmacist, who will be pleased to help.

The Palliative Care Hub

This is a free telephone advice service available in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for patients, relatives, friends and all health and social care professionals. A specialist nurse is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide advice and support to living with life limiting illnesses and the people supporting and caring for them.

Dial 111 and select option 4.

Helpful contact details

Your Community / District Nurse team:

Your GP practice:

Your local Hospice Team:

Contact us

If you require further advice or have any queries regarding information in this leaflet, please contact our **Patient Experience Team**. You can reach the team via cpicb.pet@nhs.net or by calling 0800 279 2535.