

Syringe Pumps

Information for patients, relatives and carers

What is a syringe pump?

A syringe pump is a small portable battery-operated pump that pushes a syringe to give your medication slowly over a set period of 24 hours.

The syringe that is connected to the pump is filled with medicine that has been prescribed by your doctor to help your symptoms. Your medicine will be reviewed on a regular basis and may be changed if necessary.

You do not need to do anything to the syringe pump. The medicine will continue to be absorbed over 24 hours, continuously helping your symptoms.

Why do I need a syringe pump?

Syringe pumps are used for several reasons. It is a simpler and more comfortable way to receive medication for people who would otherwise need repeated injections.

Not all these reasons will apply to you:

- Some people find it difficult to swallow their medicine in tablet or syrup form.
- Others may feel sick or vomit frequently so cannot keep their tablets in their stomachs long enough for them to work.
- When symptoms are difficult to control by tablets alone a syringe pump may be used until it is possible to re-start tablets.

Who will look after my syringe pump?

Your nurses at home, in hospital or the care home will check your syringe pump regularly to make sure that it is working well, the needle is comfortable and there are no problems with the medicines. They will change the syringe each day.

How will the syringe pump be attached to me?

A long thin tube is connected to the syringe, with a tiny needle at the other end. Your doctor or nurse will insert the needle subcutaneously, just under the skin, usually in your upper chest area or upper arm. They will put a clear dressing over the needle to keep it clean, dry and in place. Once the needle is in place you should not feel it and it can stay there for several days.

What do I need to look out for?

Your symptoms: Tell your nurse or doctor if your symptoms persist once the syringe pump is set up or change in any way.

Your skin: Sometimes the medicine in the syringe can cause a skin reaction. Your nurse will check the needle site regularly. If the area becomes sore, the needle will be moved to another part of your body.

How will I know the syringe pump is working?

If the syringe pump is working normally a green light will flash twice a minute next to the on/off button. If the pump has stopped for any reason, this light will turn red.

If you notice any of the following contact your nurse:

- The colour of the medicines in the tubing or syringe has changed.
- There is a cloudiness or sediment in the tubing or syringe.
- The skin around the needle is red, swollen or painful.
- The alarm on the pump sounds.

Please do not attempt to remove the syringe or press any of the buttons on the pump unless instructed to by your nurse.

What else do I need to look out for?

Syringe pumps are quite strong, but they can be damaged by dropping or being crushed.

A syringe pump must not get wet. Ask your nurse for advice about washing or showering.

Keep the syringe contents out of direct sunlight, and do not allow them to become too hot. Avoid placing the pump next to a heat pad, hot water bottle or electric blanket. Ask your nurse for advice on the best place to keep your syringe pump. You can get a fabric holder if you want to be mobile.

What alarms & alerts may I see or hear?

- Low/End Battery: Battery needs changing.
- Occlusion: Line is kinked or blocked.
- Pump paused too long: Pump has been stopped for more than 2 minutes.
- Program Completed: The infusion is complete.
- Syringe Displaced: The syringe has become detached from the pump mechanism.

For all these alarms please call the nursing team straight away

Towards the end of the infusion when the syringe is nearly empty an alert will sound (2 beeps every 2 minutes), this is normal. The nursing team should be on their way to change the infusion, however if you are concerned or the infusion stops before they arrive, please contact the Community Nursing Team immediately.

To return a syringe pump

All syringe pumps, clear plastic syringe pump covers, and syringe pump toolboxes need to be returned to the community nursing team. See contact details below.

Emergency Contact Details

Community Nurse:

GP:

Specialist Nurse:

Out of Hours contact:

Contact us

For specialist palliative care advice or support, please contact the Palliative Care Hub on 111 Option 3. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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.