

If you are in hospital, a hospice or care home then staff will change the syringe each day and regularly check that the pump is working correctly. They will make sure that the needle is comfortable and that you are not having any problems with the medicines.

The medicines in your syringe pump have been prescribed by your doctor to help control your symptoms; you do not need to do anything to the syringe pump. Once refilled, the medicines should continue to control your symptoms over the next 24 hours.

If you have any other questions, please speak to your district nurse, or staff in the hospital, hospice or care home.

If you notice any of the following when you are being treated at home contact your District Nurse or GP. Let your staff nurse know if you are being treated in a hospital/hospice/care home:

- 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.
- Any leakage of liquid/fluid at site.
- Needle becomes displaced.

Primary Care Palliative Care Team

March 2008

Information for patients

You and Your Syringe Pump

Name:

GP Name:

Telephone:

District Nurse

Telephone:

Out-Of-Hours District Nurse Service

Telephone:

Hospice

Telephone:

Community Clinical Nurse Specialist

Telephone:

Hospital Ward

Telephone:

Hospital Palliative Care Nurse Specialist:

Telephone:

Hospital Palliative Care Consultant:

Telephone:

What is a syringe pump?

This is a small, portable battery controlled pump. It can be carried about in a pouch attached to a belt or on a shoulder. The pump is fitted with a syringe, which gives your medicines through a needle just under the skin. The medicines are absorbed into your body. The pump runs 24 hours a day, avoiding the need for repeated injections.

Why do I need one?

Sometimes it is easier for you to have some of your medicines this way.

This may be because:

- You have been vomiting, and find it difficult to keep your medicines down. Medicines to help stop vomiting can be given in the syringe pump, along with medicines to help other symptoms such as pain. Once the vomiting has settled you may be able to go back to having your medicines by mouth.
- You have so many medicines to take that you are finding it difficult to swallow them all. Putting some of the medicines in the syringe pump can reduce the number of medicines you need to take by mouth.
- You are unable to swallow medicines. Medicines to help your symptoms can be put into the syringe pump.

Starting a syringe pump doesn't mean that your medicines have stopped working or aren't strong enough, only that this is another way of getting them into your body.

Living with your syringe pump

- The medicines in the syringe pump will be absorbed into your body throughout a 24-hour period, controlling your symptoms. Any adjustments needed will be made by your GP or District Nurse or by the hospital or hospice staff. Do not interfere with the syringe or the pump.
- You must keep the syringe pump and the needle site dry especially when washing or bathing. If you drop the pump into water, contact

your nurse, as you will need a new syringe pump to be sure that your medicines are being given correctly.

- The syringe in the pump should not be exposed to direct sunlight – you should keep it in the pouch to protect it.
- The syringe pump should not be exposed to extremes of heat. Avoid placing the syringe pump next to a heat pad, electric blanket or hot water bottle.
- You can go out and about with the syringe pump as it can be carried in the pouch supplied. **Please note: you should ask your doctor if your medicine in the syringe pump allows you to drive.**
- You can eat and drink as normal. Always check with your doctor or pharmacist to see if your medication allows you to drink alcohol if you wish.
- It is advisable **not** to use a mobile phone near a syringe pump as it may affect the way the pump works. Try to keep mobile phones that are switched on about an arm's length away.

How do I know that my syringe pump is working?

- The light above the 'ON/OFF' button will flash green about every 30 seconds. If it turns red, there is a problem with the pump – contact your nurse as soon as possible.
- Sometimes it is necessary to take some additional medicines even though your syringe pump is in place. If you are at home and are still able to swallow medicines, make sure you have appropriate tablets, capsules or liquids to take should you experience any symptoms such as pain, sickness or anxiety. Let your district nurse or GP know if you have had to take any such medicines over the course of the day.

Who will look after my syringe pump?

If you are at home, the District Nurse will come in each day to refill the syringe, check that the needle is comfortable and that there are no problems with the medicines.