

Let us know what you think and get involved

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W: www.sirona-cic.org.uk

*Calls from landlines are charged up to 10p per minute; calls from mobiles vary, please check with your network provider. This is not a premium-rate number.

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Date of creation 06/2022

Date for review 06/2024

URN 0419

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Giving injections as medicine

Prior information and considerations for carers

Service provided by

Introduction

Seriously ill people, who are nearing the end of their lives, may want to be cared for at home. As they become more poorly, they often cannot swallow oral medication or liquids. A range of injections can be provided to keep at home just in case they are needed to help.

Common symptoms can be:

- pain
- nausea/vomiting
- agitation/restlessness
- rattly breathing
- breathlessness.

These troublesome symptoms can often be relieved by extra medication given by a small injection. This is usually given by a member of the community nursing team and is often called 'as required' medication. They can be given at any time of the day or night.

Sometimes relatives can be taught how to give these injections to ensure comfort and control of pain and other symptoms. This is similar to when you might have given oral (by mouth) medicine, but using a different route because the person is no longer able to swallow.

Teaching you to learn how to do this instead of having to wait for a nurse to attend is a method that has been used successfully in parts of Australia for many years, and more recently in the UK.

When does this needs to be done?

If the person needs regular medication or frequent injections and cannot swallow, then usually the community nursing team can set up a syringe pump to give continuous medication under the skin. You will not be asked to change the pump. The community nurses will do this every 24 hours but you may still need to give occasional extra injections to control symptoms.

You do not have to do these injections unless you want to and feel comfortable. If you do, the doctors, nurses and hospice nurses will support you in this task and teach you how it is done.

If at any time you feel you can no longer do these injections, please phone Sirona care & health's Single Point of Access (first line) on **0300 125 6789**. The team can arrange for a community nurse to administer the injections instead. If you want advice or support, you can also contact your local hospice: St Peter's Hospice Advice line on **0117 9159430** or Weston Hospice on **01934 423900**.



What are the steps involved before you can give injections?

If you as a carer would like to give these injections, some steps need to be followed to make sure everyone involved is happy and that it is a safe thing to do:

- The doctors and nurses will assess if it might be helpful and possible. This would include thinking about what medicine might be needed, how often, and how complicated the situation is.
- The person will be asked if they would like you to give injections.
- You will be asked if you would like to learn more about it.
- The doctor or nurse will talk to you about benefits and difficulties, for example:
 - It can be difficult for carers as it places a burden on you – you do not have to do it and you can change your mind.
 - Near the end of life, injections may need to be given; these will not cause death but may happen near the time of death.
 - It can be a positive way for carers to help support their family members.

You will have training to show you how to give an injection- including a 'competence assessment'. You will need to show that you are able to give an injection on your own. Please remember to say if you are not happy to do this.

You will be given written information about how often you can give injections, including when to ask for help. The training given to you is very important; in order to make sure that the person is given the correct care. You **should not** train anyone else who is helping to look after the person. If you are unable to give an injection for any reason, the healthcare team should be contacted to give any 'as required' medication.

It is important for you to know it is legal for carers to give symptom-relieving medication as long as they are supported to do so.



What happens before you start giving injections?

If, after discussion with and assessment by a registered healthcare professional, it is agreed by both you and the healthcare professional that you are able to give injections, the following will happen:

1. Either:

The registered healthcare professional will insert a line so that when you give the injection you only inject into the line, not directly into the skin.

Or:

In certain circumstances you may be taught to give the medication directly into the skin, not via a line.

2. You will be taught what the medications are for, how much to give, when to give it and any likely side effects.
3. You will be taught how to draw up the required amount of drugs into a syringe and how to give the injection.
4. If you are administering the drug via a line you will be taught how to flush the line with 0.2 ml of water for injection **before and after** giving the medication.
5. You will be shown how to and asked to document each injection given.
6. You will be advised to only give up to a maximum of three injections in any 24 hour period before contacting the Sirona Single Point of Access (first line) or your local hospice (second line) for further help and advice.
7. A healthcare professional will change the line every seven days and at each visit they will review the patient's regular medication so that further injections may not be needed.

Important contacts:

Single Point of Access (Community Nursing Team):
0300 125 6789

St Peter's Hospice Advice Line 24/7:
01179 159 430

Weston Hospice:
01934 423 900

Frequently asked questions

What if I can't go ahead with giving injections?

You will receive training in how to give an injection, and this can be repeated until you feel happy. The healthcare professional giving the training will assess if you are safe to give an injection. If you or the person providing the training do not feel that you are safe to do this, then the patient will continue to receive injections when needed by a community nurse.

What if I or the person I am caring for change our minds about giving injections?

If at any point you want to stop giving injections, this is fine and do not feel pressured to continue. The person receiving injections can also say at any point that they want you (their carer) to stop giving injections. Please contact one of the numbers above and the community nursing team will take over this responsibility.

(Adapted from: Carers administration of as-needed subcutaneous medicines. Helix Centre. 24th March 2020. <https://subcut.helixcentre.com/>. St Joseph's Hospice Carer Administration of sub-cutaneous injections procedure. Version 2. 2019).