



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Your syringe pump

Information for patients,
relatives and carers

This leaflet explains what a syringe pump is, what its advantages are and some dos and don'ts to follow.

What is a syringe pump?

A syringe pump is a small portable machine that is able to give you certain medications constantly over 24 hours, via a small tube inserted under your skin into the subcutaneous (fatty) tissue. The syringe pump is started with the aim to give you relief from symptoms such as pain, nausea, vomiting, breathlessness, chest secretions, restlessness and anxiety.



McKinley T34 syringe pump

Why is a pump needed?

- If you are finding it difficult to swallow tablets.
- If you are feeling sick/vomiting.
- If you are sleeping most of the time.
- If you are finding it difficult to cope with the amount of tablets that you need to take each day to help your symptoms
- To enable adjustment of your medications quickly to get your symptoms under control as soon as possible.

What are the advantages of a syringe pump?

- Your symptoms may improve by giving medications at a constant rate.
- As an alternative to taking medications orally (if you have difficulty swallowing).
- Several medications for different symptoms can be put together in the same syringe pump.

- The syringe will be replenished by the nursing staff every 24 hours (unless there has been a change in the medications).
- You don't need to have multiple injections.
- They are portable machines.
- Can be used at any time during your illness.

Will I be aware of it?

The syringe pump itself is fairly small (only slightly bigger than a pencil case), is lightweight and portable and it makes very little noise while it is running. It is easy to set up, comfortable and painless. Small bags are sometimes available which the syringe pump can be put into to make it easier to carry around. The syringe pump does have an alarm which will sound when the medication in the syringe is about to finish or if there is a problem with the syringe pump. Whilst in hospital the nurses will regularly check the syringe pump and the site where the tube is inserted and will be able to deal with any problems to ensure that it is running properly. **If the alarm sounds when at home, you should call for support from your district nurse.**

Can I go home with one?

Yes, people can go home with a syringe pump. Your general practitioner (GP) or community nurse specialist will continue to prescribe the medication you need in the syringe pump once you are at home and the district nurses will continue to renew and look after this. The syringe pumps are pre-set to deliver the medication over 24 hours; you cannot deliver the medications any quicker or give additional doses via the syringe pump. If you need a change in the medication because your symptoms are not controlled, or if you are having side effects from the medication, then your GP or district nurse will organise this.

Some dos and don'ts

- ✓ **Do tell the ward nurse (or district nurse if you are at home) if your skin is sore or red where the needle is placed.**
- ✓ **Do tell the ward nurse (or district nurse if you are at home) if the tube comes out, the alarm is sounding or if you have any worries about the syringe pump or medication.**
- ✓ **Do tell the ward nurse (or district nurse if you are at home) straight away if you have accidentally dropped the syringe pump.**
- ✓ **Do (if you are at home) keep medication in a safe place (and out of reach of children or vulnerable adults).**
- ✗ Don't get the syringe pump wet – do not take a bath or shower while connected to the syringe pump. Please speak to the ward nurse (or district nurse if you are at home) for advice. If the syringe pump does get wet, please inform the ward nurse immediately (or if you are at home the district nurse).
- ✗ Don't share your medication with friends or relatives.

Contact your nurse/district nurse/out of hours doctor if:

- You are worried that the syringe pump is not working properly or has been damaged.
- The colour of the medicines has changed or become cloudy.
- The skin around the tube insertion site is red, swollen or painful.
- The alarm sounds.
- You have other concerns.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us on 0118 322 7826 or email palliative.care@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

RBFT Hospital Palliative Care Team, May 2026.

Next review due: May 2028.