



**East Cheshire  
Hospice**

Where people come to live

# Syringe Drivers

## A Guide for Patients



## What is a syringe driver?

A syringe driver is a small, portable battery operated device. The device is attached to a syringe, which gives you medication continuously (over 24 hours) through a small needle under the skin. The syringe driver is small enough to be carried in a pouch/bag attached to a belt, a shoulder holster or large pocket.



## Why do I need one?

Sometimes it is easier for you to have some of your medications this way. There are several reasons why you might have a syringe driver:

- if you are finding it difficult to swallow medication
- if you are feeling sick and/or vomiting frequently and you are unable to keep tablets in the stomach long enough for them to work
- if you are struggling with the amount of tablets that you need to take
- if your symptoms are difficult to control by tablets alone.

Instead of having repeated injections the syringe driver can provide a simpler more comfortable way to receive medication continuously. Starting a syringe driver doesn't mean that your medications have stopped working or aren't strong enough, only that this is a more effective way of getting the medications in to the body. Syringe drivers can be used across all care settings e.g. hospital, Hospice and at home and can be used at any point during your illness.

## Before using a syringe driver

The nurses and doctors will have discussed with you the reasons why a syringe driver has been recommended for use. The nurse will explain how the syringe driver works to you and your family and will answer any questions you have.



## Using a syringe driver

The syringe is attached to a thin piece of tubing that has a fine needle attached to the end. The nurse will insert the needle just under the skin on your chest, tummy, upper arm or leg and will secure it in place with a clear dressing. Once the needle is in place, this will be reviewed on a regular basis (at least daily) and it can stay in place for a number of days. The nurses looking after you will refill the syringe in the syringe driver every day. If you are at home, the district nurses will attend your home to do this. At the same time the nurses will

- check the pump is working properly
- check the needle site
- review your symptoms
- replace the needle every few days

## How long will I need the syringe driver for?

You may only need it for a couple of days / weeks. Your symptoms and the need for the syringe driver will be reviewed on a regular basis. In some situations patients need syringe drivers for longer and can go home with them in place. The district nurses look after the syringe drivers in the community.

# Some dos and don'ts

## DO

- Tell the nurse if your skin is red or sore where the needle is in place and/or if there is leakage at the needle site
- Tell the nurse if the needle comes out, the alarm is sounding or if you have any concerns regarding the syringe driver medication
- Keep all medications in a safe place away from children preferably in a locked cupboard
- Keep the syringe contents out of direct sunlight

## DON'T

- Immerse the syringe driver in water. You can have a bath or shower but keep the needle site dry and keep the machine out of water by placing on a nearby stool/table. Your nurse can give you advice about this
  - Do not attempt to change the settings on the syringe driver or press the buttons
  - Do not drop the syringe driver
  - Do not place the syringe driver at a higher level than the needle/ tubing
- In the event of any of these happening please contact the nurse in charge of your care / district nurses.

## How will I know the syringe driver is working?

The nurse will check the syringe driver at least daily to ensure it is working. A small light above the ON/OFF button will flash green regularly. If it turns red there is a problem with the pump and you should inform the nurse in charge of your care / district nurses as soon as possible. There is an alarm on the syringe driver that will beep if there is a problem. The alarm usually beeps for two reasons

- Blockage of flow of medication caused by a kink in the tubing
- The syringe is empty. If the alarm sounds contact the nurse in charge / district nurses.

## Useful telephone numbers

East Cheshire Hospice 24hr Advice line 01625 666999  
Hospital Specialist Palliative Care Team 01625 663177  
(9am-5pm, Mon to Fri)

GP.....

GP Out of hours.....

Districtnurses.....

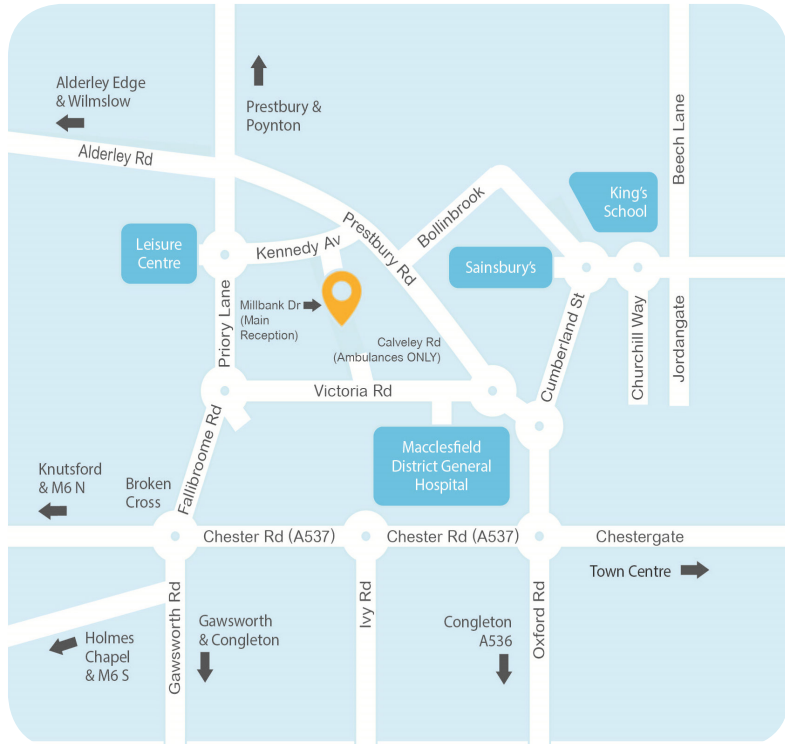
Other.....

For large print, audio, Braille version or translation, contact  
the Hospice Engagement Team. 01625 666991  
or [rallcock@echospice.org.uk](mailto:rallcock@echospice.org.uk)



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