



‘Just in case’ medicines in palliative care

Information for patients and their families

**If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format
please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.**

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید،
لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formie,
proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotowuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil,
vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe
de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتنسيق
يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

What are 'just in case' medicines?

'Just in case' medicines are a small number of medicines kept at home (or in your place of care), just in case you start with any symptoms. We give them to you now so they are ready in case you need them quickly.

These medicines are sometimes called anticipatory medicines. Being given a prescription for them does not mean someone is dying straight away. They are given 'just in case' so they are ready whenever you need them.

They are there to help keep you comfortable if your normal medicines are not working as well as they used to, or you start with new symptoms. We do not send you home with medicines for every different symptom, just ones that we see quite often.

Your doctor or nurse can explain what the medicines are and how they are used. Please ask them about anything you do not understand, or if you have any worries.

What are 'just in case' medicines used for?

These medicines are used to manage symptoms like:

- Pain
- Feeling or being sick
- Feeling short of breath or breathing more quickly than normal
- Confusion and feeling agitated or restless
- Respiratory secretions (a gurgling sound in the throat or chest when breathing).

Other symptoms can be treated so if you have any worries, let your care team know.

Some people have these symptoms in their last weeks and days of life, but not everyone does. We prescribe these medicines 'just in case' so you can use them as soon as you need them.

Do not suffer in silence; we can help.

How are 'just in case' medications given?

These medicines are normally given under the skin (subcutaneously) by a small needle, or through a small machine called a syringe driver.

This is what a syringe driver looks like:



A syringe driver gives the medicines constantly over 24 hours. The aim of using them, is to stop having to give patients lots of injections or tablets to help with their symptoms. They will be set up by the nurse.

“Breakthrough” symptoms (symptoms that happen even though medicines are given constantly) can happen.

Extra medicine can be given if you are still having symptoms. Contact your doctor or nurse whilst in hospital or at the hospice. If you are at home, contact the district nurses and they can give some more medicine.

Side effects of 'just in case' medicines

All medicines can have possible side effects. Most patients do not notice any big problems, but if you are worried let us know.

Some common side effects:

- Drowsiness (feeling more sleepy or spending more time asleep): this is a common side effect of many 'just in case medicines' especially ones used for pain or anxiety.
- Feeling or being sick: most common with medicines used for pain.
- Dry mouth: medicines that reduce secretions may cause this.
- Constipation (not going for a poo as often or finding it hard to go): medicines like morphine which is used for pain relief and shortness of breath can cause constipation.
- Confused, agitated or restless: morphine and other medicines that work the same way can cause confusion.

We can help control all of these side effects if you let us know they are happening. Sometimes we can swap to a different medicine or add in another to help.

How to get more 'just in case' medications

You will be sent home with enough medicines to last 7 days. Most of the time, this should be enough. If you use them all up, or they need replacing, call your GP or the district nurses. You might need to get the medicines from the pharmacy. Some pharmacies may deliver but call them before to check.

The district nurses will check the medicines are in date and okay to use. Most of the time they will sort everything for you, so you do not need to worry.

Where to store 'just in case' medicines

You should be given all of the 'just in case medicines' at the same time. You can choose where to put them but make sure it is somewhere safe, out of the reach and sight of children. The district nurses will normally lock them away in a safe place for you.

Keep them in a cool, dry place away from direct heat and light.

Keep them all in the same place.

Make sure the district nurses know where the medicines are kept.

If you have any questions or are unsure about anything, ask a pharmacist or the district nurses.

Who to contact if you have questions

District nurse _____

GP _____

Specialist palliative care advice _____

If you have specific questions about the medicines, contact your local pharmacy.

Whiston Hospital

Warrington Road, Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR
Telephone: 0151 426 1600

St Helens Hospital

Marshall's Cross Road, St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 3DA
Telephone: 01744 26633

Southport Hospital

Town Lane, Kew, Southport, Merseyside, PR8 6PN
Telephone: 01704 547 471

Ormskirk Hospital

Dicconson Way, Wigan Road, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 2AZ
Telephone: 01695 577 111

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