

Information Sheet – What is as needed subcutaneous (SC) medications



Patient/ Family/Whānau guide

As a person's health declines, they may have trouble swallowing pills, capsules, or liquids. To help manage pain and other symptoms, a small plastic line is placed just under your loved one's skin. This line allows for the delivery of medications directly into the body. At times, the patient may experience sudden or additional pain, nausea, etc which requires extra medication.

This is where **PRN SC medications** come in. "**SC**" stands for "subcutaneous", and **PRN** means as needed. These are extra doses of medication given using a syringe, to manage symptoms that may arise. These medications are prescribed by a doctor.

How are medications given? A nurse will insert a small line just under your skin, with a small dressing to hold it in place. This line allows medications to be given directly into the tissue beneath the skin, this does not involve using needles. The medication can be given whenever it is needed.

Who will give the SC medication? In the home a family member is asked to give this medication, sometimes more than one family member can learn this task. The nurse will show you how to give the medication.

Before giving the injection always check the skin around the site for redness, swelling or leakage.

After giving the medication, you will learn how to flush the line with saline or water 0.4 ml.

Safe disposal: The nurse will show you how to dispose of syringes.

Medication Supply: If you are running low on medications contact your GP or pharmacy for more supplies.

Understanding the medications: The nurse will complete a recording sheet, with the name of each medication, what it is for, and how often it can be given. These are placed into separate containers which will be labelled clearly. Each time you give medication, write the date, time given and what it was for e.g., pain or nausea etc.

The SC medications will be reviewed regularly to help ensure your loved one is comfortable. If you are unsure about giving a medication, please call the nurse for guidance.

What Should I Report to the Healthcare Team?

- **Injection Site Issues:** Notify the healthcare team if you notice any redness, swelling, or leakage at the injection site, or if you feel resistance while giving the injection.
- **If the line falls out**
- **How you know the Medication is working:** Let the healthcare team know if the medication is not working to manage your loved one's symptoms. Medication can take 20 minutes or longer to actually begin to work.
- **Any Concerns or Questions:** Always feel free to reach out if something is unclear or worrying you.

What if the injection is needed near the End of Life?

In some cases, when a loved one is nearing the end of life, these additional injections may be necessary to ease pain and discomfort. This is completely normal and is meant to help your loved one feel more comfortable during this difficult time. Please know that these injections are not causing death; they are part of ensuring your loved one experiences comfort and relief.

Thank you for your support in helping manage your loved one's care.