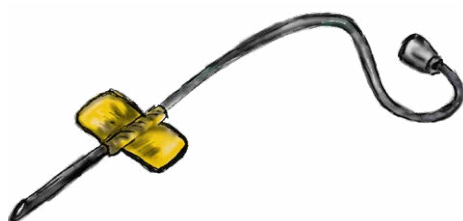


Palliative care: subcutaneous medication administration

The primary goal of palliative care is to relieve all the symptoms (pain, agitation, nausea...) to make patients feel as calm and comfortable as possible. An easy, convenient way of administering the treatment is to insert a simple device called a canula into the tissue layer under the skin (this is known as *subcutaneous administration*).



Advantages

Subcutaneous administration is not painful.

- It helps patients live as fully as possible and retain the use of their arms and legs.
- It is easy for healthcare workers and caregivers to use.
- It enables medications to be absorbed quickly and relieves most symptoms (pain, nausea, vomiting, agitation...) quickly and effectively.
- Medications have the same effect as when injected intravenously, while causing fewer unwanted side effects.
- It avoids having to administer frequent injections.

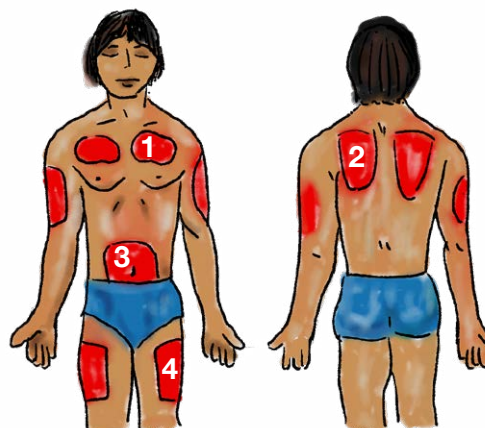
How is medication administered?

- **By continuous infusion:** an infusion pump is loaded with all the medication which is administered continuously for 24 hours, or up to 7 days.
- **Intermittent bolus injection:** the medication is administered at intervals (every 4-8 hours) with a syringe. This method can also be used to administer “rescue medication” for pain crises or if symptoms cannot be relieved effectively by other means.

Which parts of the body are used for inserting the device?

The most common injection sites are:

- Front of the chest, below the collar bone (1).
- Shoulder (2).
- Abdomen (3).
- Front-side of thigh (4).



Avoid injecting areas that are swollen, very hairy or inflamed.

What care should be taken with subcutaneous administration?

The caregiver can take responsibility for administering medication by this method: the healthcare professional will check that they know how to do it and that they follow the prescribed therapy correctly.

- Before administering the injection, **hands should be washed thoroughly** for 20-30 seconds with soap or hand sanitizer and, if possible, disposable gloves should be worn.
- The canula can be left in place for up to 7 days. Every time the medication is administered, **the injection site has to be checked** for redness, soreness, swelling or hardening. Make sure that the pump and the canula don't accidentally get disconnected and that the latter doesn't get out of the puncture site.

If there are any problems with this, healthcare professionals must be contacted. The injection site may need to be changed.

Should the caregiver or the family have any concerns or worries, they should contact the primary care healthcare team or call 112.