

Giving medications subcutaneously (under the skin) can be an effective means of managing people's symptoms if they are unable to take medications by mouth. The following is a guide for caregivers & whānau to learn how to draw up and give these medications to help relieve symptoms. Your home-care team will help to identify which medication may be helpful for a particular symptom or issue. Please call for advice if you are unsure – we are here to support you.

1. Wash your hands with soap and water and dry well

2. Assemble the equipment on a clean flat surface. You will need:

- Medication ampoule
- Normal saline for flushing after injection of medicine
- Small syringes
- Blunt drawing up filter needle(s) and blue plastic cap(s)
- Medication labels
- Alcohol wipe
- Sharps container or hard-walled container for disposal of
 - needles / glass



3. Attach the blunt drawing up needle to the syringe

- Take the syringe out of the packet
- Put the needle onto the syringe using a clockwise twisting action until secure (keeping the outer cover on the needle)



4. Open the plastic or glass ampoule

- Hold the glass ampoule in your non-dominant hand. If there is a small dot on the neck of the glass ampoule face this towards you. Use your dominant hand to carefully break the top of the glass ampoule off by snapping it away from you
- You can use an unopened alcohol swab, or a piece of gauze/tissue to protect your fingers whilst breaking the top off the ampoule. Take care not to cut your fingers



5. Drawing up medication from an ampoule:

- Place the ampoule in a position that is comfortable for you, such as on a Table, or held in your non-dominant hand. The medication should not tip out of the ampoule, even if tipped upside down
- Insert the needle into the ampoule
- Draw the medication into the syringe by slowly pulling back on the plunger until you have slightly more volume than needed
- Once the medication is removed from the ampoule, hold the syringe with the needle pointing upright
- Flick the syringe with your finger to get all the air bubbles to the top, then slowly push the plunger up to expel the air bubbles from the syringe
- Slowly push the plunger of the syringe upwards until you have the correct dose/ amount of medication measured in the syringe as instructed by the doctor/nurse
- Remove the blunt needle and replace with a plastic blue cap. Label syringe(s)
- Dispose of the glass medication ampoule and blunt needle directly into the sharps bin or hard walled container.



[continued]



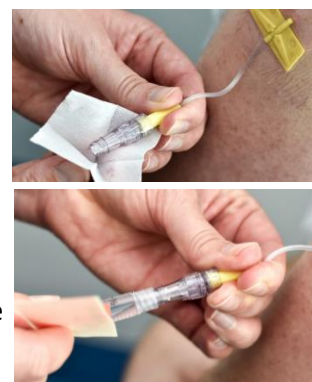
6. Check the injection site for:

- Redness
- Tenderness
- Swelling
- Leakage

If any of the above are present – call the hospice or district nurse for advice before proceeding

7. Give the injection into the subcutaneous cannula (often this will be into the upper arm/shoulder or stomach):

- Take the prepared medication syringe(s) and normal saline flush to the person
- Clean the clear 'bung' on the end of the subcutaneous cannula by scrubbing it for approximately 20 secs with the alcohol wipe. Wait 20 secs to allow the alcohol on the bung to dry. Take the blue cap off the end of the syringe
- Attach the syringe by pushing it into the centre of the clear bung, turning it slightly clockwise to secure
- Slowly push down on the syringe plunger until all the medication in the syringe has been given
- Unscrew the syringe anticlockwise to disconnect, and place the empty syringe in the rubbish bin
- Connect the normal saline flush syringe using the above steps, and gently flush the line with approximately 0.5mls of normal saline. This will ensure the person receives the full dose of medication that may otherwise sit in the subcutaneous line. Unscrew the syringe anti-clockwise to disconnect, and replace the cap on the end of the syringe for further use.



8. Record the medication(s) given and check later that they have worked

9. Safe storage and disposal of medication(s):

- Store pre-prepared labelled syringes in a container in the fridge, or as directed by your nurse. Take care to ensure medications and other equipment such as the sharps bin are kept out of reach from children
- Store sharps (e.g. glass ampoules + needles) and hard walled container out of reach as directed by your nurse
- It is important to dispose safely of unused medication(s). Return unused medication to your local pharmacist when they are no longer required.

10. Contact your nursing service/doctor if you have any concerns

Mary Potter Hospice:

Wellington Community Hospice team	Tel: (04) 901 0006
Kenepuru Community Hospice team	Tel: (04) 237 7563
Kapiti Community Hospice Team	Tel: (04) 296 1283
Inpatient Unit (24 hours)	Tel: (04) 801 0006



Capital and Coast DHB Community Health District Nursing team:

Community Health Wellington	(04) 806 2556
Community Health Kenepuru	(04) 918 2011
Community Health Kapiti	(04) 903 0224

