



Sandwell and West Birmingham
NHS Trust

Anticipatory medicines

Information and advice for patients

Palliative Care

What are anticipatory medicines?

Anticipatory medicines are a small supply of medications for you to keep at home just in case you need them. A doctor or nurse will give you a supply of anticipatory medicines that can be given by injection, which may include the following:

- Morphine or Fentanyl
- Levomepromazine
- Hyoscine Butylbromide
- Midazolam

You cannot take these medicines yourself; they can only be administered by a doctor or nurse.

The medicines will come with some information for the doctors and nurses and a medicine administration sheet which authorises your District Nurse to give you the medicines if you need them.

What are the benefits of having anticipatory medicines?

The benefit of having a supply of anticipatory medicines is that they are available when you need them. It can be difficult to get these medicines in a hurry, especially at night or at weekends so it is helpful to have them ready.

- Morphine or Fentanyl reduce pain and shortness of breath.
- Levomepromazine reduces the feeling of sickness.
- Hyoscine Butylbromide reduces secretions in the throat or chest.
- Midazolam helps with restlessness.

What are the risks of these medicines?

All medications can have side effects. The possible side effects of the anticipatory medicines will vary depending on your condition and other medications you may be taking at the time, but may include drowsiness, nausea and dry mouth. Your doctor or nurse will discuss possible side effects of the medicines with you and those caring for you if you should need to use them.

Are there any alternatives to these medicines?

If you are able to take tablets or liquid medicines you may be offered the medicines in these forms instead of having them as injections.

Storing anticipatory medications

These medicines should be stored in their original boxes at room temperature. Make sure they are in a safe, secure place, out of the sight and reach of children. The Palliative Care Team will supply you with a box to ensure safe storage of your injectable medication.

It is very important that you do not give these medicines to anyone else, they have been prescribed only for you.

The medications prescribed include 'controlled drugs', these are strictly monitored for legal reasons and must be available to be checked every time a nurse or doctor visits.

When you no longer need to keep anticipatory medicines they need to be taken to your local pharmacy for disposal.

Further information

If you have any questions about your anticipatory medicines you can ask your District Nurse, Palliative Care Team, Specialist Nurse, GP or Pharmacist.

If you think you need to have your anticipatory medicines or are having symptoms that are troubling you please contact your GP or Specialist Palliative Care Team.

Contact Details

Connected Palliative Care

Palliative Care Suite,
Sandwell Hospital,
Lyndon,
West Bromwich,
B71 4HJ

Open every day including weekends and bank holidays

8AM – 8PM – 0121 507 2664 (Option 2)

8PM – 8AM – 07896 793814

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- West Midlands Palliative Care Physicians (2023). *Guidelines for the use of drugs in symptom control*. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.westmidspallcare.co.uk/wmpcp/guide/> [Accessed 8 April 2024].
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