

# Opioid substitution treatment pathway: for patients no longer able to take oral maintenance methadone in last days/weeks of life.

**NB Keep maintenance methadone completely separate from analgesics**

**For advice see Anticipatory Drugs and Syringe Driver Chart for contact numbers**

## Pain control

- Treat patient's pain as if not taking any opioids (which includes methadone)

## Unable to swallow oral opioids for pain control in last days/weeks of life

- Syringe driver is required for subcutaneous opioids
  - See conversion chart
- **Separate syringe driver charts** for pain and symptom control
- **Anticipatory drugs**
  - Keep in safe repository

## Methadone maintenance

- Usual oral methadone dose

## Unable to swallow oral methadone in last days/weeks of life

- Switch to subcutaneous (sc) methadone
- **Calculation**  
Half oral methadone dose to get sc dose  
e.g. oral methadone 40mg **divide by 2**  
= 20mg methadone **sc** over 24hours)
- **Diluent is 0.9% sodium chloride**
- **Separate** syringe driver chart for subcutaneous methadone prescription
- Inform York Drug and Alcohol Service (Changing Lives) or North Yorkshire Horizons to stop oral methadone prescription

## Practicalities for injectable methadone, opioids and anticipatory drugs

- **Safekeeping, storage & governance of CDs**
- **Access to drugs**
- **Prescriber**
- **Education for healthcare professionals**
  - See local policies for your area

## Where to access injectable methadone?

- Community pharmacy
  - methadone and anticipatory drugs (ring palliative care for named pharmacies)
- Hospital pharmacy (in emergency)

## When a patient dies

Inform York Drug and Alcohol Service (Changing Lives) or North Yorkshire Horizons when patient dies

## Safekeeping, storage and governance of injectable methadone/opioids

- **Patient's home**
  - safe repository/ locked box
- **Organisation** Spectrum Tel Nos
  - York Drug and Alcohol Service (Changing Lives) No 01904 464680
  - North Yorkshire Horizons No 01723 330730
- **Safe required-** for injectable medication
- Injectable medication will be managed by community health professionals

## Who can prescribe injectable methadone?

### Recommend one prescriber for injectable methadone

- Doctors in "Spectrum"
  - NMP can continue a methadone prescription
- Palliative medicine consultants
- Exceptional circumstances
  - contact GP with guidance to aid prescribing

## References

- Clinical guidelines on drug misuse and dependence. UK guidelines on clinical management. Update 2017 DoH
- Palliative care formulary
- PCF 6
- Methadone guidelines York Hospitals NHSFT- revising

Owner: Dr Anne Garry, York Teaching Hospitals NHSFT, Issue: Version 2, February 2020

Review date: Feb 2023, Approved by D&T Apr 2019 (V1) and V2 York and Scarborough MCC Feb 2020