



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Syringe Drivers

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:
Hospital Macmillan Palliative Care Nurses

Palliative Care Team
Scarborough Hospital
Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL
Telephone 01723 342446

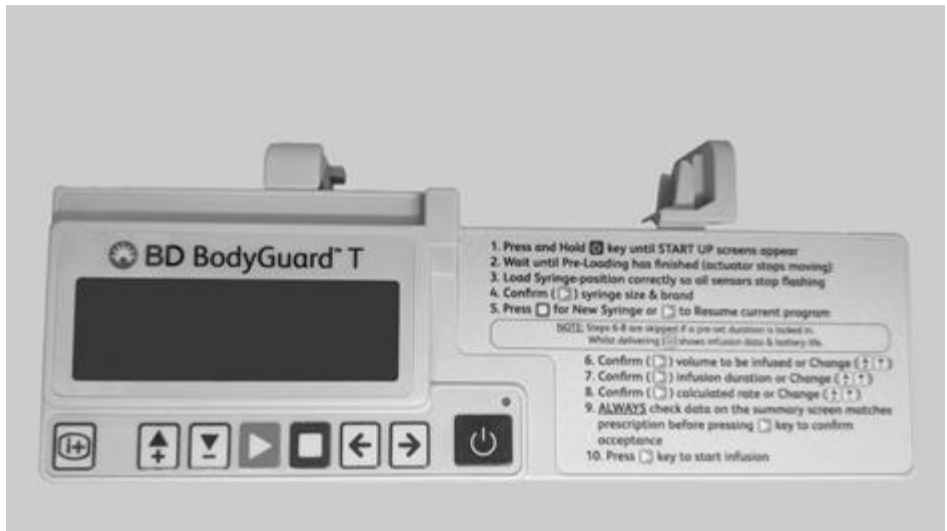
Palliative Care Team
York Hospital
Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE
Telephone 01904 725835

Contents	Page
What is a Syringe Driver?	3
Why do I need one?	4
How and where?	5
Will it get in the way?	6
Who can I speak to if I have any questions?.....	6
Tell us what you think of this leaflet	7
Teaching, training and research.....	7
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).....	7
Leaflets in alternative languages or formats	8

What is a Syringe Driver?

Syringe drivers are sometimes used to help give medication.

Image of BD BodyGuard T syringe driver:



A syringe driver is a small, portable, battery driven pump. This goes through a small plastic needle, placed under the skin. The medication in the syringe is prescribed by your doctor and may be a painkiller, anti-sickness or calming medication, or a combination of these. A small dose of the medication is given under the skin every hour for 24 hours.

Why do I need one?

Syringe drivers are useful for a number of reasons. You may be given one because:

- You are having difficulty swallowing your medication.
- Your body is unable to absorb medication given by mouth. This may be due to nausea / vomiting or where there is disease in the stomach or intestines.
- You are having difficulty taking a large quantity of medications.
- The medication you need cannot be taken by mouth.

A syringe driver can be used as a temporary measure until your symptoms have settled, or for a longer period of time. Starting a syringe driver does not mean your current medication has stopped working or is not strong enough; it is simply a more effective way of receiving it.

You can still be discharged home with a syringe driver. The District Nurses will visit regularly to check it and refill the syringe. If you decide you do not want to start one then we will always consider any possible alternative options.

How and where?

The needle site for a syringe driver is usually on an upper arm or thigh, but it can also be placed into the skin on your chest or stomach. It should not be placed in an area where the skin is sore, bruised, tattooed or swollen. The needle is removed leaving a small plastic tube which will be held securely in place by a clear dressing. It does not sit in a vein and does not need a cannula.

The syringe driver will be monitored and checked regularly by the nursing staff. The nurse will check the syringe contents to ensure that the medication is delivered at the correct rate; the needle site will be checked for soreness or irritation. The contents of each syringe will last for about 24 hours. If your symptoms are not well controlled, the syringe can be renewed at any time to increase the dose or change to an alternative medication.

Will it get in the way?

A syringe driver is quite small and is enclosed in a plastic box to protect it. We have special bags with a shoulder or waist strap for you carry it around in. A green light will occasionally flash to show it is working. It also has alarms that may sound to alert the nurses if the tubing gets kinked, when the battery is low, or when the syringe is nearly empty. The syringe driver must not get wet, but it is still possible to bathe or shower (a nurse can remove it temporarily for 15-20 minutes) and you should suffer no ill effects.

Who can I speak to if I have any questions?

Any member of the Nursing or Medical team will be happy to answer any questions that you or your family may have.

This information was correct at the time of printing. While the Trust makes every reasonable effort to keep its information leaflets up to date, very recent changes may not yet be reflected in this document.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact Katie Conduit, Hospital Macmillan Palliative Care Nurse Specialist – Team lead, Palliative Care Team, Scarborough Hospital, Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL, telephone 01723 342446 or email katie.conduit@nhs.net.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:
www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

St Leonard's Hospice
Caring for Local People



Saint Catherine's
Caring for you at Hospice and Home



Owner	Katie Conduit, Hospital Macmillan Palliative Care Nurse Specialist
Date first issued	November 2013
Review Date	September 2025
Version	4 (issued January 2025)
Approved by	York NHS Trust Palliative Care Teams
Document Reference	PIL816 4
© 2025 York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. All Rights reserved.	

www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk