

What do I need to know about the machine?

The pump has been designed to deliver your medications in as safe and reliable a way as possible. The instructions on the front give your nurses and doctors a guide to how the pump works and how to obtain other information such as remaining battery life.

You may find the machine heavy to carry around, some people find a small shoulder bag helpful.

Will I have it forever?

No, you will not necessarily have the syringe driver for ever. You may only need to have it for a few days or weeks until all your medicines have been adjusted to the best dose for you. As soon as it is possible, the doctor will prescribe tablets, but that may be done gradually, over a few days.

If you are worried, or have any more questions about your syringe driver, contact either your doctor or nurse.

be vocal – what's your view?

Hearing about your experience of St Elizabeth Hospice can help us to improve our services and provide better care and support for those who need it.

To make a comment or complaint, or to compliment us on something we've done well, please write to us or visit www.stelizabethhospice.org.uk

be connected – how to get in touch

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Your syringe driver explained be informed

What is a syringe pump?

A syringe pump is a battery powered machine which is made up of three parts:

- The machine itself, which looks like the picture below
- Attached to that is a syringe, with the drugs drawn up inside it
- Attached to the syringe is a thin piece of tubing with a very thin plastic tube (cannula) on the end.



The cannula goes just under the skin, e.g. on your chest, your tummy or the top of your arm/shoulder or leg. It is placed under the skin with a needle

but this needle is then removed and disposed of. The cannula is held in place with tape. Usually the cannula can stay in one place for several days, but if it gets sore or uncomfortable, ask your nurse to move it to another place.

This machine is designed to give you your medicines over 24 hours, so each day your nurse will come about the same time to fill up a new syringe and check the machine.

Am I getting worse?

You may have felt worried when your doctor or nurse suggested using the syringe driver. It does not mean that you are getting worse. There are three reasons why the syringe driver is used – not all of these reasons will apply to you:

- Often it is used when you cannot take pills due to sickness and difficulty swallowing
- It may be used whilst the doctor is finding the correct dose of drug for your particular symptoms
- It is used to avoid having to give injections frequently, because they can be painful and uncomfortable.

What if I think the machine is not working?

There may be intermittent beeps every few minutes (alerts) or a continuous beep (alarm). The green light on the front may change to red. If you think there is something wrong with the syringe pump, or if the alarm sounds — don't panic — follow these instructions one by one:

1. Look at the small screen on the front of the machine. There will be an error message to help you.
2. An alert may simply be warning you that the infusion is due to end soon. Do not worry, your community nursing team will have anticipated this and planned when the syringe will need renewing.
3. You may wish to silence an alert by pressing the 'Yes' button which will silence the alert for 2 minutes. The pump will continue to run.
4. An alarm may be telling you there is a problem with the infusion. It may not be possible to silence this.
5. If in any doubt about an alert or alarm, ring your community nurse or the hospice advice line and tell

them what you can see on screen. They will advise you how to resolve the problem or arrange for someone to attend if necessary. Do not press the 'No' button without advice.

What if it runs out?

Even if the infusion completely runs through before renewal, there is still usually a window of at least two hours before the effects of the medication start to wear off. This will vary according to the medication involved and other patient-related factors.

Will I need to change my lifestyle?

Hopefully not. We hope that the machine will make your life more comfortable and, therefore, you can be as active as you want to be.

- You can have a bath. Try to keep the needle site dry and keep the machine out of the water by putting it on a stool beside the bath.
- You can eat what you feel you want to eat, and a little alcohol will not do you any harm.
- You can go shopping or out in a crowd, if you want to. No one will be able to hear the machine.
- You can be taken out in a car, but you should ask your doctor before driving yourself.
- You can work in the garden, if you want to.
- You do not need special clothing.