

Patient Information Leaflet SYRINGE DRIVERS

What is a Syringe Driver?

This is a small, portable battery controlled pump. It can be carried about in a pouch attached to a belt, on a shoulder holster, or in your pocket. The pump is fitted with a syringe, which gives your medicines through a needle just under the skin. The medicines are absorbed directly into your bloodstream. The pump runs 24 hours a day, avoiding the need for repeated injections.

Why do I need one?

Sometimes it is easier for you to have some of your medicines this way. This may be because:

- You have been vomiting, and find it difficult to keep your medicines down. Medicines to help stop vomiting are given in the syringe driver, along with medicines to help other symptoms such as pain. Once the vomiting has settled you may go back to having your medicines by mouth.
- You have so many medicines to take that you are finding it difficult to manage them all. Putting some of the medicines in the syringe driver can reduce the number of medicines you need to take by mouth.
- You are unable to swallow medicines. Medicines to help your symptoms can be put into the syringe driver.

Starting a syringe driver doesn't mean that your medicines have stopped working or aren't strong enough, only that this is a more effective way of getting them into your body, if you cannot take them by mouth.

Who will look after my syringe driver?

If you are staying in the hospital, hospice or care home the staff there will check your syringe driver regularly to make sure it is working well. The syringe will be changed each day by the staff. They will check that the needle is comfortable and that you are not having any problems with the medicines.

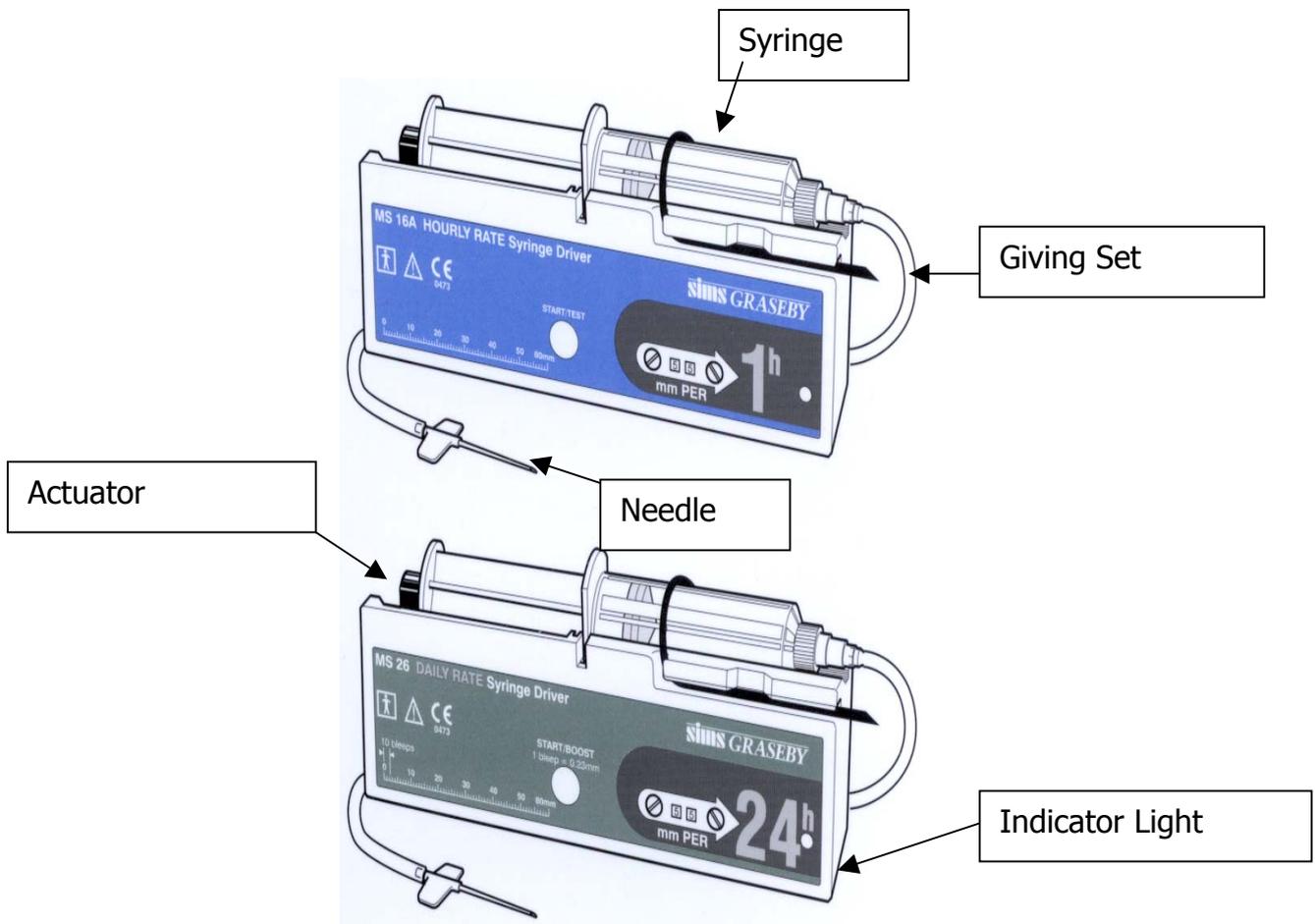
If you are at home, your district nurse will come in each day to replace the syringe, check that the needle is comfortable and that there are no problems with the medicines.

The medicines in your syringe driver have been prescribed by your doctor to help your symptoms; you do not need to do anything to the syringe driver. The medicines will continue to be absorbed over 24 hours, helping your symptoms round the clock.

What does a syringe driver look like?

There are two different syringe drivers currently in use in Forth Valley. They work in the same way to give medicines. The pump (actuator) pushes the medicine into the giving set, through the needle and into the tissues under the skin where it is absorbed into your bloodstream. While the pump is running the indicator light will flash to let you know that it is working.

The pump is lightweight and about 15cm long by 5cm tall. It will have a clear plastic cover to protect it and may be in a fabric bag, to protect the syringe from light. Your nurse or doctor will be able to show you the syringe driver.



Some dos and don'ts

The medicines in the syringe driver will flow into your blood stream throughout the 24-hour period, controlling your symptoms. Any adjustments needed will be made by your GP/District Nurse or by the hospital or hospice staff. Do not interfere with the syringe or the pump.

You must keep the syringe driver and the infusion site dry. Take care when washing or bathing to keep the syringe driver dry. If you drop in into water contact your nurse, a new syringe driver will be needed to be sure that your medicines are being given at the right rate.

The syringe driver should not be exposed to direct sunlight– you should keep it in the fabric pouch to protect it from light.

The syringe driver should not be exposed to extremes of heat. Avoid placing the syringe driver next to a heat pad, electric blanket or hot water bottle

If you notice any of the following contact your nurse/GP:

The colour of the medicines in the giving set has changed.

There is a cloudiness or sediment in the giving set.

The skin around the needle is red, swollen or painful.

The alarm on the pump sounds.

How will I know the syringe driver is working?

The yellow light on the case will flash so long as there is power in the battery. If the light goes out while the syringe driver is running, the battery will need to be replaced when the next syringe is put in. There is no need to change the battery before then, the rest of the medicine in your syringe will be given. A new battery will last for fifty infusions. You will hear the motor whirring every few moments; this is normal.

If the alarm sounds it may mean your infusion is complete, or that there is a blockage in the syringe or giving set. Contact your nurse who will check the pump.

If I have any worries who should I contact?

GP:

District Nurse:

Hospice Nurse:

Hospice Doctors:

Hospital Macmillan Nurse:

Hospital ward Named Nurse:

Out of Hours contact: