

Symptom Support Medicines Pack (SSMP) - oral medicines

This information sheet is intended for carers, but patients may also wish to read this information so that they know about the medicines they are taking.

These medicines are called ‘when required medicines’ and have been prescribed to help reduce the symptoms of breathlessness and agitation. They should be kept in the patient’s home until/if they are needed. Please only give them when they are needed by the patient, and not more often than the directions on the label allow.

The healthcare professionals involved with the patient’s care will continue to look after the patient’s needs and they will give any injections that have been prescribed.

‘WHEN REQUIRED’ MEDICINES THAT CAN BE GIVEN BY THE CARER

These medicines are those taken by mouth (or in some cases may include suppositories) and have been provided to treat symptoms such as agitation or breathlessness should they develop in a patient, (including patients with covid-19 infection), and to keep the patient comfortable. These medicines have been prescribed for use only if they are needed, as getting medicines quickly can be difficult, especially at night or weekends and at times when health care services are under a lot of pressure.

When you feel the patient is becoming breathless or more agitated you should seek advice from the Severn Hospice healthcare team before starting the medicines.

Please be ready to tell the healthcare team what medicines the patient is currently taking so that they can advise you accordingly.

WHEN REQUIRED MEDICINES:

MEDICATION	WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE	WHAT IS IT USED FOR?	HOW MUCH DO I GIVE?
Paracetamol	Tablets, liquid, (or possibly suppositories)	Reducing fever	The correct dose for the patient and how often it can be given is written on the label.
Strong Painkiller Oral morphine (Oramorph) or oxycodone	A bottle containing liquid. There will also be a spoon or small syringe to help measure out	Breakthrough pain and shortness of breath	The correct dose and how often it can be given is written on the label.
Lorazepam	A tablet which must be broken in half and can be placed under the tongue or between the lip and gum. It can be blue or white. A few drops of water can help the tablet dissolve if the patient’s mouth is dry.	Anxiety/panic and shortness of breath.	The correct dose and how often it can be given is written on the label.
Levomepromazine tablets (This may not be necessary and may not always be prescribed for the patient)	Tablets need to be broken in half and only give half a tablet as a dose.	restlessness, agitation, confusion, shouting or twitching. This can help people who are at the very end of their lives and who have these symptoms	The correct dose and how often it can be given is written on the label.

Recording which medicines have been given

It is important to keep a record of the times medicines are given, the dose given and how much the medicines help the symptoms. This will enable the Severn Hospice community nurse team and other healthcare professionals to make the right decisions for the best care of the patient. Please fill in a new page for each day. There are sufficient spaces for each medicine to record this each time the medicine is given.

Problems are not expected, but it is important to follow the directions on the label for each medicine. These medicines have been used for many years and are well-tolerated.

The medicines all take time to work. If they have not worked after an hour then seek advice before another dose is given in accordance with the instructions of the label. **If you are worried that the medicines are not working then please seek advice on the number you have been given by your Severn Hospice community nurse team or Shropdoc out of hours.**

There may come a time when the patient is very ill and will soon die. This might mean that the time when they die is near to when you have last given them medication. It is very important for you to know that these two things are not related and the medication has not ended their life.

HELP AND SUPPORT

This is a stressful situation at any time but the current pressures expected on the NHS are making things even more stressful for people. We have developed this guidance and adjustment to usual practice to try and give as much support to families as we possibly can. There is always someone you can contact to speak to, try the different numbers that you have as some may be very busy but everyone will continue to do the very best that they can.

Monday-Friday 0900-1600:

Your usual GP

District Nursing team (open until 1800 Sat and Sunday also)

Severn Hospice community nurse team
Apley site: 02039043663
Bicton Site: 01743 261530

1800-0800 and weekends:

Shropdoc Palliative Care Line 01743 454912

Hospice @home team (0800-2000 if you are supported by them regularly): 01743 261506