

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:** one for pain and symptom control and one for methadone
- **Anticipatory drugs**
 - Keep in safe repository

Methadone maintenance

Usual oral methadone dose

Unable to swallow oral methadone in last days/weeks of life (if possible, contact usual prescriber before patient is unable to swallow)

- 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)
(if patient has missed any doses - it may not be always appropriate to prescribe half. Need to discuss this with usual prescriber from the Drug and Alcohol Services)
- **Diluent is 0.9% sodium chloride (also compatible with water for injection)**
- **Separate** syringe driver chart for subcutaneous methadone prescription
- Dilute in syringe driver to the largest volume possible + rotate site every 2 days to minimise local inflammation
- Inform the appropriate Drug and Alcohol Services 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*

Safekeeping, storage and governance of injectable methadone/opioids

- **Patient's home** - safe repository/ locked box
- **Organisations - Drug and Alcohol Services**
 - Change Grow Live (York): 01904 464680
 - North Yorkshire Horizons: 01723 330730
 - Forward Leeds: 0113 8872477
 - East Riding Partnership:
 - Hull: 01482 336675
 - Bridlington: 01262 458200
 - Goole: 01405 608210
- **Safe repository required** - for injectable medication
- Injectable medication will be managed by community health professionals

Where to access injectable methadone?

- York Hospital pharmacy (in emergency)
- Scarborough Hospital pharmacy: not held as stock *
- Harrogate Hospital pharmacy: not held as stock *
- Community pharmacy: not routinely held as stock *

*Allow sufficient time for ordering. Estimated delivery time on weekdays would be next day delivery.

Who can prescribe injectable methadone?

Recommend one prescriber for injectable methadone

- Usual prescriber from the Drug and Alcohol Services
- Specialist Palliative Care Team
- In exceptional circumstances GP or Hospital prescriber with guidance from Palliative Care Team

When a patient dies

Inform usual prescriber from the Drug and Alcohol Services when patient dies

References

- **Clinical guidelines on drug misuse and dependence. UK guidelines on clinical management. Update 2017 DoH**
- **Palliative care formulary eighth edition**
- <https://rightdecisions.scot.nhs.uk/scottish-palliative-care-guidelines/pain/individuals-with-substance-use-disorder/medication>

