**Syringe Driver Information Leaflet for Patients & Relatives**

**What does a syringe driver look like?**  
The syringe driver that the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability use is the McKinley T34 Ambulatory Syringe driver. They are operated by a battery. They measure approximately 30 cm in length by 5 cm wide and may have a plastic cover to protect it.

**What does a syringe driver do?**

A syringe driver is a small, portable pump which can be used to deliver a constant supply of medicines under the skin over a 24 hour period. The pump is fitted with a syringe which contains the medicine. Attached to the syringe is a fine tube at the end of which is a very small needle that is placed under the skin and held in place with a see through dressing. The medicines are absorbed from under the skin into the blood stream. The syringe is replaced each day with a new syringe containing the medicine.

**Why do I need a syringe driver?**

Starting a syringe driver doesn’t mean that the medicine being given has stopped working or is not strong enough. Giving the medications through a syringe driver can be a more effective way of getting them into the body if they cannot be taken by mouth.

Reasons it may be difficult to take medicines by mouth include

* Nausea or vomiting, and finding it difficult to keep your medicines down. Medicines to stop vomiting can be given in the syringe pump. Once the vomiting has settled the medicine can be changed back to be taken by mouth.
* Too many medicines to take and it becoming difficult to manage to swallow them all. Unfortunately not all medicines are made in a way which can be given via a syringe driver, but changing those that can to this route may reduce the number you need to take by mouth.

* Being unable to, or finding it difficult to, swallow medicines at all. Using a syringe driver means that a constant supply of medicine can be provided without the need for repeated injections.

It is usually only necessary to use a syringe driver to deliver the medicine for a few days (changing the syringe every 24 hours as above) but there is no limit to how long one can be used if it is needed.

**Who will look after my syringe driver?**

The nursing staff on the ward will set the driver up and check it regularly to make sure it is working correctly. The syringe containing the medicine will be changed each day. The site where the needle enters the skin will also be checked regularly to ensure it is comfortable. Usually the needle can remain in position for up to 3 days however if the skin is becoming reddened or swollen it may need changed more often.

It is possible to be discharged from hospital with a syringe driver. In this case, the district nurse will come each day to replace the syringe, check that the needle is comfortable and that there are no problems with the medicines.

**How will I know the syringe driver is working correctly?**

Once set up, the green light on the case will flash and the display screen will indicate the infusion is in progress.

If the pump detects a problem the light will turn red or the pump will give an audible alarm.

If the alarm sounds it may mean that the infusion is coming close to being completed or that the battery needs replacing, or that there is a problem with the pump such as the line has become blocked. If the alarm sounds please inform the nursing staff who can check the driver and correct the problem.

**Is there anything else I should know about the syringe driver?**

The syringe driver cannot go in water so please do not allow it to get wet.