

SUBLINGUAL (under the tongue) and BUCCAL (cheek) MEDICATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR CARERS



Guidelines for Carers

Definition

Sublingual and buccal medication administration are two different ways of giving medication that do not involve swallowing the medicine.

Sublingual administration involves placing a medication under the tongue where it is absorbed into your blood.

Buccal administration involves placing a drug between gums and cheek, where it also is absorbed into the blood. Both sublingual and buccal drugs come in tablets, liquids, ampoules or sprays.

Why sublingual and buccal drugs are given

Your doctor may prescribe sublingual or buccal drugs under any of the following circumstances:

- The drug needs to get into the system quickly
- There is trouble swallowing medication
- The medication doesn't absorb very well in the stomach
- The effects of the drug would be decreased by digestion

The cheek and sublingual areas have lots of tiny blood vessels. There, drugs can be absorbed directly into the bloodstream without going through the digestive system.

Mouthcare

Mouthcare is very important as a dry mouth or ulcers will affect absorption of medications. Maintaining a clean, moist mucosa will improve absorption.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODCy8fjQSuM>

Medication

You will have instructions detailing which medication to use for which symptom and how much of each medicine to draw up, if you are drawing these independently.

To prepare the medications

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1v5F6ep5RM>

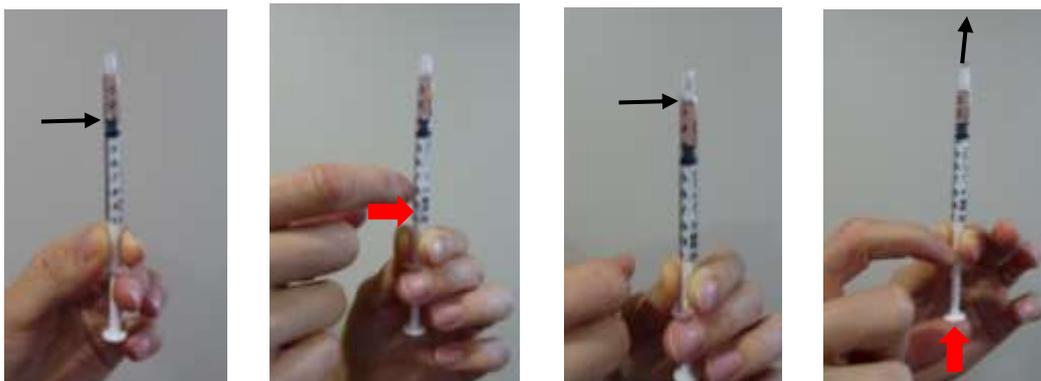
Assemble the equipment. You will need:

- Medication
- Eggcup or other small container for liquid medications
- Syringes
- Blunt filter drawing up needle (for ampoules)
- Pill crusher for pills
- Sharps container/pottle
- Labels and containers

Wash your hands with soap and water and dry well

For liquid medicines

- Use a one millilitre syringe without the needle to draw up the correct dose
- Draw up directly from the bottle if possible, otherwise pour out a small amount of medicine into an egg cup or similar
- After drawing some medicine into the syringe remove any air by tapping the syringe so the air rises to the top. Push in the plunger until all the air comes out.



- Expel excess medicine back into the bottle so you have the correct prescribed dose in the syringe
- You are now ready to give the medicine
- If you are preparing more than 1 dose, label with the date, medication name and dose and store in a separate container in a safe place

For tablets

- Some tablets are designed for sublingual or buccal use
- You may only require a portion of the pill be taken to get the prescribed dose. If this is the case, you will need to cut the pill before it can be taken
- Use a pill cutter if possible as this is more precise. If this is unavailable, use a knife
- If the tablet needs to be crushed, it is best to use a tablet crusher which your pharmacy should have. If you cannot get one of these, you can use a pestle and mortar. If you do not have either, then you can crush the tablet under the bottom of a glass on a clean chopping board
- Scrape the crushed tablet into a clean eggcup or other suitable container and mix with the recommended amount of clean tap water
- Some tablets dissolve better than others. Mix well
- Draw up medication back into the syringe
- You are now ready to give the medicine
- If you are preparing more than 1 dose, label with the date, medication name and dose and store in a separate container in a safe place

For medication in drop form

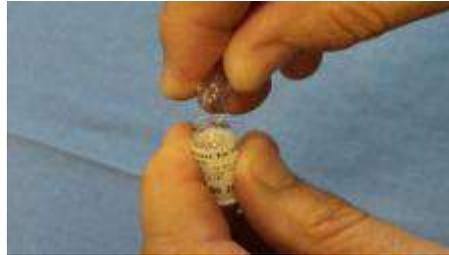
- Drop the required number of drops onto a teaspoon
- Drops should not be administered directly from the neck of the bottle in case the dropper dislodges
- You are now ready to give the medicine

For medicine from an ampoule

- Push the blunt filter needle onto the syringe. 1mL syringes will have a sharp needle already attached which should be replaced with a filter needle. This prevents any small fragments of glass entering the syringe
- For a plastic ampoule simply twist the top of the ampoule until it is removed



- For a glass ampoule, hold the ampoule upright with the pointed end at the top. Check all fluid is removed from the neck of the ampoule. If not, gently flick top of the ampoule until the fluid runs back



- If there is a dot on the ampoule, place your thumb over the dot and hold the base of the ampoule with the other hand like this....



- To open the ampoule, lever your thumbs away like the arrows in the picture



- Dispose of the top into the yellow sharps container or disposal pottle

IMPORTANT – KNOW HOW MUCH VOLUME OF THE AMPOULE YOU ARE TO DRAW UP. This will be documented for each individual medication on the instruction form

- Place the ampoule in a position that is comfortable for you, such as on a table and hold it steady
- Insert the needle into the ampoule. Draw up the medication by slowly pulling back on the plunger of the syringe



- Once the medication is removed from the ampoule, hold the syringe with the needle pointing upright
- Flick the syringe with your finger to get all air bubbles to the top, then push the plunger up to expel the air bubbles from the syringe



- Next slowly push any extra medication back into the ampoule until you have the correct volume as written on the instruction form

- Put the cap back on the needle or use a cap if this has been provided and remove the needle. If you have plenty of supplies dispose of the needle or put the needle in a container so that it can be reused
- Dispose of the glass ampoule directly into the sharps bin or pottle with a lid. A plastic ampoule goes into the rubbish
- You are now ready to give the medication
- If you are preparing more than 1 dose, label, ensuring that you can see the markers so that you can reuse the syringe, with the date, medication name and dose and store in a separate container in a safe place

How to give sublingual and buccal medicine

1. **Double-check the frequency and dosage of medication prescribed.** Before taking or administering any medication, it is important to confirm that the correct dosage is prepared and is being taken/given at the proper intervals
2. **Raise the head of the bed** or have the person in a sitting position
3. **Place the medication under the tongue or on the inside of the cheek.**



4. **The sublingual medication should be held and not swallowed if possible.** If the person is in a sitting position, tilt head forward to avoid swallowing of the medication. Most medications should have an absorption time of approximately one to three minutes. Avoid opening the mouth, eating, talking or moving during this time to ensure that the tablet or medicine doesn't move and has time to absorb completely.
5. **After you have given the medication:**
 - Place empty syringes and blunt needles into a clean container for re-use

- Record the medication given, the date and time given and whether the medicine had an effect.

6. Contact the health care provider if:

- You are unsure about giving the medication
- You feel that the medication has not been effective
- You are concerned the medication is causing side effects
- You are running out of medication

Safe storage and disposal of medications:

- Store medication in a lidded container in a cool safe place away from children.
- Store sharp bins/jars out of reach
- Return unused medications to your local pharmacist when they are no longer required

Updated: March 2020	Nelson Tasman Hospice	Approved:
Review Date: Mar 2023		
Author: A Wallace & J Fleming		Date: March 2020