



A Note About These Guidelines:

These are unprecedented times. There is no roadmap yet. We are facing situations that we never expected or wanted to. Working together we can make it through with empathy, compassion and sense of service intact.

These guidelines have been rapidly assembled and should be seen as an acute response to a fast-moving pandemic. The situation is fluid, and best practice is likely to need to change quickly. As we learn more about the specific needs of people dying with COVID-19, these guidelines will be constantly updated, and we welcome your input and experience in helping to keep these as useful and relevant as possible.

A guideline for accessing resources and training for managing syringe drivers for aged residential care, primary health and community setting

Note: to be used with other COVID -19 resources on symptom management <https://www.hospice.org.nz/covid-19/covid-19-for-health-professionals/>

General considerations

Note: A syringe driver should only be operated by, or under the supervision of, appropriately trained personnel.

In addition, Health Professionals using syringe drivers should abide by relevant legislation and guidelines, such as:

- New Zealand Nursing Council Competencies and Scope of Practice for Registered Nurses.
- Enrolled Nurse Scope of Practice.
- Regulations for the prescribing, dispensing and administration of medications (Medicines Act 1981)
- Good prescribing practice (Medical Council of New Zealand, 2020)
- Local policies and protocols for the use and management of syringe drivers.

Be aware of the infection control issues of sharing equipment.

Use only if clinically indicated.

Continue to use oral medications if the person is able to swallow and tolerate them, or consider:

- Non-pharmacological symptom management
- Sublingual medication
- Subcutaneous cannula to administer regular medication
- Transdermal patches.

Access guidance from your local hospice if you require advice and support.

Explanation and communication with the residents, patients, families and whānau is important.



Prescribing medications for use in a syringe driver

- Work with your GPs and pharmacies to ensure you have adequate stock of medications to ensure availability for symptom management.
- All prescribing should be based on clinical assessment and identified need.
- Refer to:
 - local prescribing guidelines for last days of life care or
 - resources on the Hospice New Zealand COVID -19 site
 - [Te Ara Whakapiri Guidance for the Last Days of Life](#) for prescribing advice and algorithms
- Access the advice of the hospice specialist palliative care team if symptoms are complex.
- Prescribing anticipatory medication for syringe drivers is not recommended.

Training

Registered Nurses should be trained and competent to set up and manage syringe drivers.

However, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, hospices are not currently able to deliver the Hospice New Zealand Syringe Driver Competency Programme.

- Current certification will be extended for six months and then reviewed.
- Training and assessment will be resumed in due course.

Meanwhile, as an online alternative, you will find some resources to support your practice here:

<https://www.hospice.org.nz/covid-19/covid-19-for-health-professionals/sd-resources/>

Video on setting up a T34 Syringe Driver

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcifvE5pZYc&feature=youtu.be>

Video on insertion and checking

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RArCEW13ql4&feature=youtu.be>

Access to online training

Hospice Waikato has generously made their online training temporarily available for those that wish to access it. No fee will be incurred.

Go to <https://www.hospicewaikato.org.nz/education-item/online-learning>

Look for the logo and follow the instructions



This opportunity will be available until the end of May and then access reviewed.

Note: this will not replace the full competency training.



The HNZ NikiT34 Assessment Tool can be used to indicate the required knowledge for the Registered Nurse to practice safely. You can find it on <https://www.hospice.org.nz/covid-19/covid-19-for-health-professionals/sd-resources/>

You will need to register with your local hospice at a later date to get signed off and certificated.

Other resources

- Palliative Care Handbook (9th Edition) 2016

<https://www.hospice.org.nz/resources/palliative-care-handbook/>

- The use of T34 syringe pumps during Covid-19 pandemic – literature search by the research team at University of Glasgow

<https://scotpalcovid.wordpress.com/2020/03/27/the-use-of-syringe-drivers-during-covid-19-pandemic/>

Some principles of all COVID-19 guidelines produced by the Collaboration:

As with all guidelines, they are designed to support decision making and best practice alongside individual assessment and ongoing reassessment as possible.

No one size fits all, and the guideline recommendations should be tailored to individual circumstances. If local guidelines are available, these guidelines can be used in addition as appropriate. In some instances, these guidelines may not necessarily be appropriate or fitting.

Whilst these guidelines are aimed specifically for people with COVID-19, the principles may also apply to people who are dying of other conditions too during a crisis.

Please do not share these guidelines on social media: the information may be sensitive to the public if not given the appropriate context.

Please feedback with your experience, and what else needs to be added or changed, as we learn more about how best to help people needing palliative care in a COVID-19 pandemic. Please email rachel@hospice.org.nz