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## Subcutaneous Medication Infusions

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### What are Subcutaneous Medication Infusions?

Subcutaneous (SubQ) infusions provide a way to administer medications to a person who is unable to take them by mouth because of a medical condition. When a healthcare provider orders the medications to be administered subcutaneously, a very small needle is placed under the patient's skin into the subcutaneous (fatty) tissue rather than into a vein. Medications are then given, for the body to absorb, through a thin tube that is connected to this needle. The needle and tubing are secured to the body with a thin piece of clear, waterproof tape. A nurse can insert the needle and give subcutaneous medication infusions in the patient's home.

### What Should I Know about Subcutaneous Sites?

- The subcutaneous insertion site may be on the abdomen, chest wall, upper outer thigh or upper outer arm.
- The site is generally changed every 3-5 days, but may stay in place longer.
- Your nurse may refer to the site as a "butterfly" or "button."
- Your nurse will explain the medications that are given.
- If receiving an infusion by pump, your nurse will explain its use.
- Avoid suddenly twisting or turning your body in the area where the site is located to keep from stretching the tubing.
- While receiving your infusion, slight redness or swelling at the site is common. It should decrease soon after the infusion is complete and should disappear within 2-4 hours.

### What to Report to the Hospice/Palliative Care Team?

- Check the site twice a day. If you notice leaking fluids, pain, redness, bruising, burning or swelling at the site, report it to your nurse.
- If the site becomes painful, or if redness and swelling persist for several hours, report it to your nurse.

**Teaching Sheet provided by Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association**



#### References

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