

## Patient information factsheet

# ‘Just in case’ medicines for adults

This factsheet contains information about ‘just in case’ medicines. It explains what these medicines are, why you have been prescribed them and when you need them. We hope it helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns about ‘just in case’ medicines, please contact your general practitioner (GP) or community nurse for advice.

### What are ‘just in case’ medicines?

‘Just in case’ medicines, also known as anticipatory medicines, are a small supply of medicines for you to keep at home (or your place of care) ‘just in case’ you need them in the future at short notice. The medicines can help relieve symptoms, such as pain and sickness.

The medicines are usually prescribed for people who are in their last days or weeks of life and who wish to be cared for in the community (for example, in their own home, a care home or a nursing home) rather than in hospital.

The medicines are given as injections under the skin by a trained healthcare professional (for example, a community nurse).

### Why do I need ‘just in case’ medicines?

You have been prescribed ‘just in case’ medicines to help make you as comfortable as possible as your health declines.

You may be prescribed multiple medicines to ease different symptoms. We have included some examples in the table below.

Symptoms	Medicines
Pain	Morphine
	Oxycodone
Nausea (feeling sick) or vomiting	Haloperidol
	Levomepromazine
Restlessness or feeling agitated	Midazolam
Bubbly breathing	Hyoscine butylbromide (Buscopan)

### What are the benefits?

By having these medicines available at your home (or place of care), it helps you get the medicine you need as quickly as possible, avoiding any delays that come from waiting for the medicines to be prescribed or be supplied by your pharmacy.

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It also means that you are less likely to need to go into hospital to receive care should your symptoms worsen, or new symptoms develop.

## Are there any side effects?

'Just in case' medicines are usually well tolerated. However, some people may experience drowsiness.

If you have any concerns about this, please discuss these with your GP or community nurse.

## I am experiencing symptoms – what should I do?

The 'just in case' medicines should **only** be given to you if your usual oral medicines (medicines taken by mouth) are not improving your symptoms or you are unable to swallow them or keep them down for any reason (for example, due to vomiting).

- **If you experience pain, sickness or other symptoms**, you should try to take your usual oral medicine (for example, pain relief medicine) first to see if it helps.
- **If it does not help, you or your carer can phone your community nurse, community palliative care team (if already under their care), GP or NHS 111 to request support.** The healthcare professional will discuss your symptoms with you and your carer, or they will refer you to the appropriate healthcare service. The healthcare professional may ask you to take an extra dose of your usual medicines if they think that this is what is needed. If this does not help or is not possible, the healthcare professional may give you an injection from your 'just in case' medicines. You will usually experience relief from your symptoms within an hour of receiving the injection.

## Your medication administration chart

For a healthcare professional to be able to give you these medicines at home (or your place of care), you will need to have both your 'just in case' medicines and your medication administration chart, known as the 'Community Anticipatory Medication Administration Order'. These should both be given to you when you leave hospital.

If you have not been given your medication administration chart or there is an issue with your medicines, contact the ward you were cared for on using the details at the end of this factsheet.

## What should I do if my condition changes?

If your condition changes, you or your carer should let your GP or community nurse know so that they can reassess you and check whether your regular medicines and 'just in case' medicines (and their doses) are still right for you.

If you're admitted to hospital or another care setting, the medicines can go with you as they have been prescribed for you. If you're unable or do not wish to do this, please let the healthcare staff looking after you know that you have 'just in case' medicines in your home (or place of care).

## How do I care for my 'just in case' medicines?

The medicines have been prescribed for you and should **not** be given to or taken by anyone else.

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## Storage

You should keep your 'just in case' medicines at home in a safe place, out of the reach of children or other vulnerable people. The medicines do **not** need to be stored in a fridge.

It is important that you let your healthcare team know where you have stored the medicines.

## Expiry dates

When you receive your 'just in case' medicines, your carer or the community nurse should check and note the expiry date of each medicine. The expiry dates should be checked each month. If your medicines are due to expire soon (in the next two weeks), let your GP practice or community nurse know so that a new prescription can be requested for you.

## Ordering more medicines

Your supply of 'just in case' medicines will be just enough to last until you can arrange a new prescription. If you have used some of the 'just in case' medicines and need more, contact your GP practice or community nurse so that a new prescription can be requested to replace the medicines.

## Unused medicines

If you no longer need your 'just in case' medicines or any other medicines you take, please return these to your community pharmacy or dispensing doctor.

## What happens next?

When you are ready to leave hospital, a member of your healthcare team will refer you to the community nursing team, if this is appropriate for you (this is not usually needed if you are going to a nursing home). A member of the community nursing team will then be in touch with you once you are back at home (or your usual place of care).

## Contact us

If you have any problems with your discharge medicines or you have not been given your medication administration chart, please contact us.

Hospital ward: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: **023 8120** \_\_\_\_\_

For any other queries about your medicines, please contact your GP or community nurse using the relevant details below:

GP: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Community nurse: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Outside of working hours, please call NHS **111** or your community palliative care team (if you are known to them and they run a service outside of normal working hours) for advice.

Information adapted with kind permission from NHS inform - [www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/palliative-care/planning-for-the-future/just-in-case-medicines](http://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/palliative-care/planning-for-the-future/just-in-case-medicines)

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