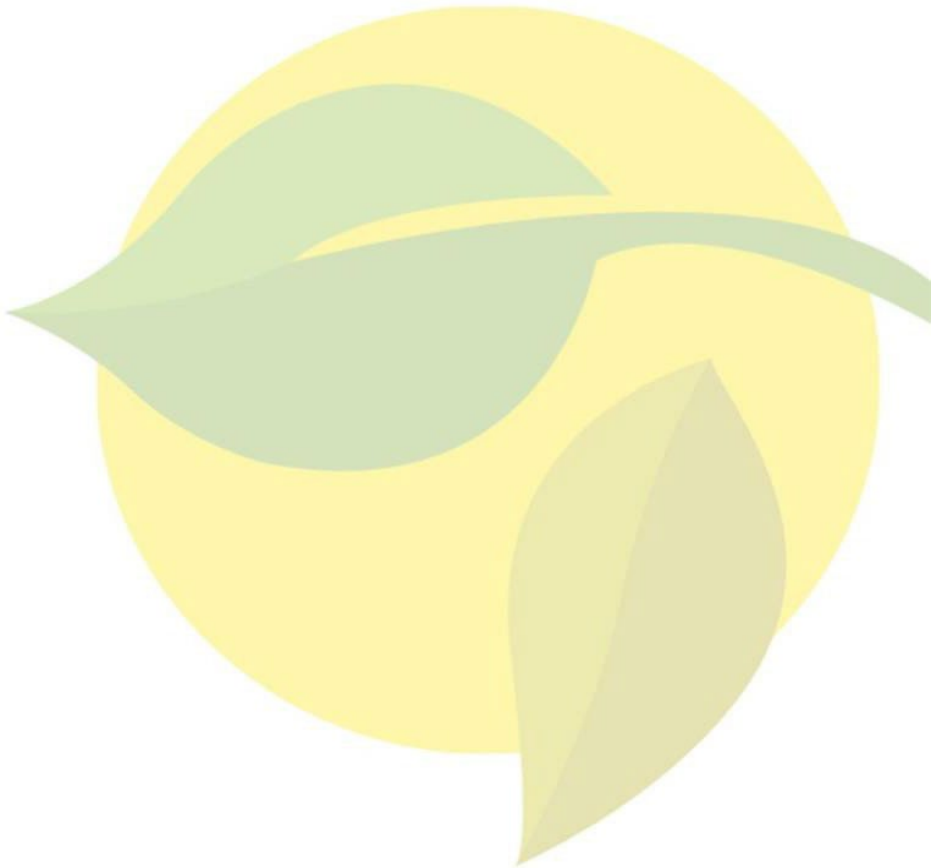


# Anticipatory Medicines

Information for patients, relatives and carers



## What are anticipatory medicines?

(Sometimes called 'just in case medicine')

They are a small supply of medicines that are given by injection. They are not for oral use. They are prescribed by a doctor just in case you need them. You will keep these at home, which helps to avoid the difficulties of trying to get them at weekends or during the night when your general practice (GP) surgery or pharmacy is closed.

## Why are anticipatory medicines needed?

They are used if you are no longer able to swallow medicines in liquid or tablet form. This may be because you are being sick or because the medicine is not getting to where it needs to work.

## Who can / should give them?

These medicines should only be given by a nurse or doctor by injection. They should not be given by you or your family.

## The most commonly prescribed anticipatory medicines are:

**Morphine** – to help control pain and breathlessness.

**Midazolam** – to help control restlessness.

**Levomepromazine / Haloperidol** – to help control sickness.

**Glycopyrronium** – to help control secretions.

## What are the risks of anticipatory medicines?

Like all medicines, there are possible side effects, and these will differ depending on your condition and other medicines you take. Always refer to the information leaflet that can be found in the box.



The most common symptoms are drowsiness, nausea and dry mouth. Your doctor or nurse will be able to discuss this further with you if needed.

## Looking after anticipatory medicines

These medicines are prescribed for you only and shouldn't be given to anyone else.

They should be left in the original boxes and stored at room temperature.

Make sure that they are kept in a safe place out of reach and sight of children and vulnerable people.

Let your district nurse know that you have stored these medicines at home. When they are no longer needed or out of date, they can be taken to your local chemist for safe disposal.

If you are admitted to hospital, you can take these medicines with you or you can let the hospital staff know you have them at home.

## References

West Midlands Palliative Care Physicians. Palliative Care Guidelines for use of drugs in symptom control. Revised 2023

NHS inform 'Just in case' medicines. Available from [WWW.nhsinform.scot](http://WWW.nhsinform.scot). Last updated 22.01.2025

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Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals anticipatory medications leaflet.



If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

The specialist palliative care team on 01384 244238  
(9.00am – 5.00pm)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet,  
please email [dgft.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:dgft.patient.information@nhs.net)

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