

The following medications and dose guidelines are recommended for symptom management in the last days of life

Symptom	Medication dose range and charting	How long does it take for s/c medication to work?	Common side effects
Pain (if opioid naïve)	Rx Morphine 2.5-5mg s/c 4 hourly prn for pain	20 mins to take effect, peaks around 30-60 minutes.	Constipation, N & V, Dry mouth, itchy skin, drowsiness, confusion
	Rx Oxycodone 1.25-2.5mg s/c 4 hourly PRN for pain	20 mins to take effect, peaks around 30-60 minutes	Constipation, Dry Mouth, N & V, drowsiness, confusion.
Terminal Restlessness	Rx Midazolam 2.5-10mg s/c 4 hourly PRN for terminal restlessness/agitation	5-10 minutes to take effect	Can irritate the skin. Give slowly Drowsiness, forgetfulness
Respiratory Tract Secretions	Rx Hyoscine N-Butylbromide 20mg s/c 4 hourly PRN for RTS	Rapid acting, lasts about 2 hours	Dry Mouth, blurred vision, rash, drowsiness, agitation
Nausea and Vomiting	Rx Levomepromazine 2.5mg-5mg s/c 8 hourly PRN for nausea and vomiting.	60 mins to take full effect	Drowsiness, rash, dry mouth
Dyspnoea	Rx Morphine 2.5-5mg s/c 4 hourly PRN for dyspnoea	20 mins to take effect, peaks around 30-60 minutes.	As Above
	Rx Oxycodone 1.25-2.5mg s/c 4 hourly PRN for dyspnoea	20 mins to take effect, peaks around 30-60 minutes.	As Above.

Indications for initiating a subcutaneous pump (SCP):

- SCP required if resident is currently on oral medication that needs to be continued e.g. M-Eslon and/or Metoclopramide. If a resident is already on regular opioids, the dose range may be different from above.
- If the resident experiences symptoms requiring ongoing prn medications (more than 3 prn medications in 24 hours) a sub cut pump should be considered as per symptom management guidelines.
- Refer to Arohanui Hospice or District Nursing for Syringe Driver Management if required.
- PRN medication can and should be used with SCP for symptom management.

KEY PRACTICE POINT

Caution, consideration, critical thinking, clinical skills and knowledge are all required when administering appropriate and timely anticipatory medications.