

Who will support me?

You are not alone. Your health care team will support you.

Your doctor or nurse practitioner will prescribe the medicines to be used to treat the breakthrough symptoms.

Your pharmacist will help you by getting the prescribed medicines and can answer questions about the medicines.

Your nurse will visit you at home and will give you a 24-hour phone number to ring if you have any concerns or need advice.

What should I do next?

- Think about if you want to help manage breakthrough symptoms using subcutaneous medicines.
- If possible, talk with the person you are caring for about taking on the role.
- Talk with your family and friends to see if someone can learn how to do this with you.
- If you decide you would like to learn to give subcutaneous medicines, talk with your nurse or another health care professional.



"The information and the training session were really helpful. This made us so much more competent and able to care for my grandfather in his final days."

Ismael, aged 20, cared for his grandfather

"Helping to look after symptoms makes you feel that you are part of it, that you are helping. It's part of the business. At least you are contributing, you are not sitting there as an onlooker and just feeling helpless."

Sue, aged 55, cared for her husband



Information for carers

Helping to manage breakthrough symptoms safely using subcutaneous medicines



Most Australians say that if they were terminally ill they would prefer to be cared for at home if possible.

One of the most common reasons a person receiving palliative care is transferred to hospital is because their symptoms, like pain or shortness of breath, are difficult to manage at home.

This brochure explains how carers and health care professionals can work together to manage symptoms so that transfer to hospital may be avoided.

Sometimes even with regular medicines, symptoms can unexpectedly get worse. When this occurs it is called a 'breakthrough' symptom and the person may require an extra dose of medicine.

As illness progresses it may not be suitable to give the person an extra dose of medicine using tablets. If this happens, medicines can be given through a small plastic tube placed under the skin. This way of giving medicines is called subcutaneous. It is a safe and effective way to give medicine.

Many carers in Australia have been taught to give subcutaneous medicines to help manage breakthrough symptoms experienced by the person they are caring for.

What do other carers say?

Carers who have managed subcutaneous medicines say they feel a strong sense of achievement and satisfaction from being able to contribute to the comfort of the person they are caring for.

Carers report being pleased they have been able to help keep the person at home, because that is what the person wanted.



"We knew when the pain hit we were able to do something to try and relieve it immediately, without having to sit waiting, powerless, for someone to come and do it. I believe it gave us the confidence to keep him at home to the very end."

Alek, aged 42, cared for his brother

What is my role?

You can be taught and guided by your nurses to help manage breakthrough symptoms experienced by the person you are caring for.

Of course this role is voluntary - it is your decision to make. If you are unable to do it, the person you are caring for will still be well looked after by the health care team.

If you do decide to take on this role, the nurse will teach you what you need to know in a one-on-one training session. You will have plenty of time to ask questions.

The nurse will use written guides, videos and a practice demonstration kit. They will leave these in your home so that you can use them at any time.

"The written practical guide and video suited us. Everything was there that we needed. We felt good about the process and we would recommend it to anyone."

Nora, aged 48, cared for her mother

