

# Information sheet for families

This brochure is to provide you with some background information about a medical device called a NIKI T34™, T34™ or BodyGuard™ T syringe pump. This device can help improve quality of life for the person you are caring for.

## About NIKI T34™, T34™ and BodyGuard™ T syringe pumps

NIKI T34™, T34™ and BodyGuard™ T syringe pumps are used to deliver medicine to manage palliative care symptoms such as nausea or pain. This can help to keep a person's symptoms under control so that they can be cared for safely while remaining in the place of their choice.

### What is a syringe pump?

A syringe pump is a small portable battery-operated device. It holds a syringe containing medicine as prescribed by a doctor or nurse practitioner. The pump is used to give the medicine at a constant rate throughout the day. The NIKI T34™, T34™ and BodyGuard™ T are some types of syringe pumps commonly used in Australia. These syringe pumps operate in a very similar manner.

### How does a syringe pump work?

A syringe pump works by very slowly pushing medicine from a syringe through a plastic cannula placed just under a person's skin. Once under the skin the medicine is absorbed into the body. This is called a subcutaneous infusion.

Before the syringe pump is set up, a nurse will insert the subcutaneous cannula. The place where the subcutaneous cannula goes into the skin is called an insertion site. Common sites for insertion are the upper arm, the chest, the abdomen and the upper leg. The cannula is secured in place using a clear, waterproof dressing. This enables the area to be washed. The cannula is attached to fine tubing connected to the syringe in the syringe pump.

### Why is a syringe pump used?

The syringe pump and the subcutaneous cannula are a safe and painless way to deliver medicine to help keep a person as symptom free as possible. Medicine in a syringe pump is often used to treat common palliative symptoms such as pain, shortness of breath, nausea and/or vomiting or restlessness/agitation.

A syringe pump is used in different circumstances, for instance if a person is unable to swallow properly or if medicine taken by mouth cannot be absorbed effectively for any reason.

### How safe are the NIKI T34™, T34™ and BodyGuard™ T syringe pumps?

These syringe pumps are used extensively in Australia and have proven to be very reliable and safe. Syringe pumps have many safety features:

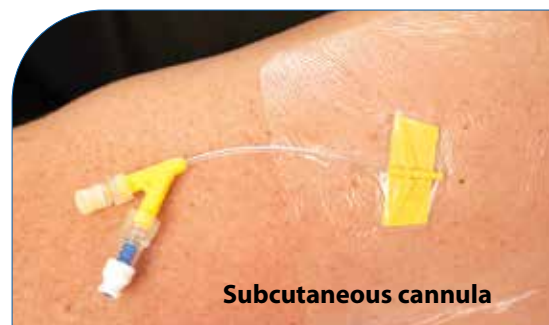
- The rate at which the medicine is delivered is fixed so it cannot accidentally be changed
- It is kept in a locked box to protect it from damage
- It will sound an alarm if anything goes wrong.



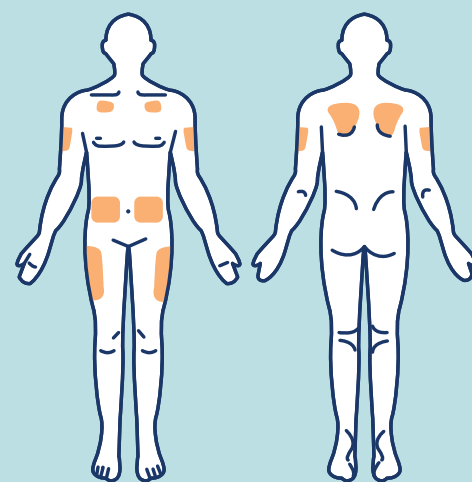
NIKI T34™ syringe pump



BodyGuard™ T syringe pump



Subcutaneous cannula



Subcutaneous cannula insertion sites

## What is the role of your healthcare team?

A doctor or nurse practitioner will prescribe the medicine to be put in the syringe pump. Usually a nurse (or perhaps another health professional) will insert the subcutaneous cannula, draw up the medicine into the syringe and set up and check the functioning of the syringe pump.

The nurse (or other health professional) will check regularly that:

- The cannula remains in place
- The insertion site does not show signs of swelling, tenderness, redness or leakage
- The syringe pump is running properly, and delivering the correct dose of medicine
- The person remains comfortable and their symptoms are controlled as best they can be.

## Are there any special considerations if the person is being cared for at home?

If the person is being cared for at home, the family will be relied upon to report any concerns about the person or the syringe pump. They will be provided with a phone number that can be called at any time, day or night, so family members can ask questions and be provided with reassurance or instructions from their healthcare team.

Family members will be asked to:

### 1. Check the subcutaneous cannula site a few times a day

To do this simply look at the insertion site and contact the nurse immediately if any of the following is noticed:

- Swelling
- Tenderness
- Redness
- Leakage around the insertion site
- The cannula and the clear film have been dislodged.

### 2. Check the syringe pump a few times a day

Make sure the green light keeps flashing and that the tubing is not leaking. Do not worry about checking it overnight.

### 3. Remember:

- The syringe pump is NOT waterproof. The syringe pump should not be immersed in water. Take care to protect the pump from water splashes while the person is showering e.g. wrap the pump in a plastic bag.
- Keep the syringe pump in the locked box to protect it
- A pouch or holster can also be used to carry the syringe pump if the person is moving around.



## Contact information for carers of home-based palliative care patients

Name of clinical service .....

Business hours telephone number .....

After hours telephone number .....

## Further questions?

A member of your healthcare team can answer any further questions.