

Symptom Response Kits – Nursing Process Summary

A Symptom Response Kit (SRK) provides medications and supplies in the home of a patient receiving palliative care in anticipation of potential symptom crises, optimizing the chances of keeping the patient in the home and preventing emergency room visits.

When do I obtain a SRK?

- When the patient's Palliative Performance Scale is $\leq 50\%$ or at the discretion of the prescriber (e.g. related to known rapidity of disease trajectory or remote geographical location of the patient)

How do I arrange for a SRK to go into a home?

- The nurse and prescriber will assess the patient's home for any risks storing injectable opioids
- *Symptom Response Kit Prescription / Order* forms are available from any South East Home and Community Care (H&CC) office or on the South East H&CC website <http://healthcareathome.ca/southeast/en/Partners/forms>
- The nurse and prescriber will review the Prescription / Order Form to determine what medications might be needed for this person in the event of a crisis
- The prescriber will complete and sign the Prescription / Order Form and send it to the H&CC Care Coordinator (CC) responsible for this patient
- The CC will fax the *Symptom Response Kit Prescription / Order* form to Medical Pharmacy
- Medical Pharmacy will prepare a SRK containing the prescribed medications, supplies for parenteral administration and foley catheters with insertion tray and drainage bag
- Medical Pharmacy will deliver the SRK to the home in a cardboard box with yellow SRK labels; as this is anticipatory and not for urgent medication needs, the delivery can take up to 2 business days
- A copy of the *Symptom Response Kit Prescription / Order* form will be placed in the patient's chart in the home

Is there a charge to the patient for the SRK contents?

- No, there is no charge for the patient as Physician Facilitated Access Codes (PFAC) and Limited Use Codes (LUC) will cover all medications listed
- All supplies will be covered through the LHIN H&CC program.

Where and how is the SRK stored in the home?

- The SRK will be delivered in a sealed, Medical Pharmacy cardboard box
- Yellow labels on each side of the box will help identify the SRK
- The SRK will be stored in a place in the patient's home away from the patient's usual medications and supplies
 - If there is a yellow *Palliative Care Plan for an Expected Death at Home* folder in the home, it contains a small yellow SRK label, which will be placed on the outside of the patient's chart to indicate that a SRK is in the home
 - Note the location of the SRK on the *Symptom Response Kit Prescription / Order* form in the chart

What is the procedure at the time of a crisis?

- The nurse will make a bedside assessment

- If the prescriber previously indicated a preference for the nurse to contact the physician prior to administering SRK medications, the nurse will contact the prescriber or designate
- Otherwise, if the orders are appropriate, the nurse will open the SRK and administer medications or perform a catheterization
- If the orders are not appropriate or if the nurse has a concern about proceeding, the nurse will contact the patient's prescriber or designate for advice.
- Afterwards, if the prescriber has not already been contacted, the nurse will notify the prescriber of the crisis and together they will plan the ongoing care of the patient

What do I do with the SRK now that it is opened?

- Following a crisis, the prescriber and nurse will determine whether to replace the medications and supplies used, depending on the patient's ongoing care
- Remaining, unused SRK medications and supplies may be required at a later date
- An opened SRK will not be replaced, unless the nurse and prescriber believe it is necessary based on the patient's ongoing care

How is the SRK monitored and updated?

- The nurse will check the SRK monthly
 - Each agency will determine the most effective prompt for this check
- A label on the outside of the SRK indicates the earliest expiry date of all medications
- Each month, the nurse checks:
 - SRK storage location
 - expiry date
 - kit integrity
 - appropriateness of medications and concentrations
 - appropriateness of medication orders
- The nurse will record the date of the check and the nurse's name on the large yellow label on one side of the SRK's exterior
- If the expiry date is reached prior to using the SRK, a whole new kit will be ordered
- If medications need to be changed or added, a whole new kit will be ordered
- If a whole new kit is needed, a new *Symptom Response Kit Prescription / Order* form will be completed, as described above (**How do I arrange for a kit to go into a home?**)

What is the process for disposal of the SRK?

- The nurse opens the SRK at time of patient's death or discharge to hospital / Palliative Care Unit and disposes of all medication into the sharp's container for pick up by Medical Pharmacy
- The nurse notifies the Care Coordinator that a biohazard pickup is needed
- Remainder of kit and supplies to be left with patient's family to dispose of as per usual process

Not all medications are appropriate or necessary for all patients; professional discretion will apply.