Subcutaneous Medication Administration Infusion

What are subcutaneous medication administration infusions?
It is a way of administering medications to a person who is unable to take medications orally. Subcutaneous is frequently referred to as SubQ. If a patient is unable to take medications by mouth because of a medical condition, the healthcare provider may order the medications to be administered SubQ. A very small needle is placed under the skin into the subcutaneous (fatty) tissue rather than in a vein, and some medications may be given. The body will absorb the medication effectively. Subcutaneous medications can be administered by the nurse in the patient’s home.

What should I know about subcutaneous sites?
- The SubQ insertion site may be on the abdomen, chest wall, upper outer thigh, or upper outer arm
- The sites are generally changed every 3 to 5 days, but may stay in place longer
- Your nurse may refer to the site as a “butterfly” or “button”
- Your nurse will explain the medications that are given to you
- If receiving an infusion by pump, your nurse will explain its use
- Avoid sudden twisting or turning of the body in the area where the site is located to avoid stretching the tubing
- While getting your infusion, slight redness or swelling at the site is common but should decrease soon after the infusion is complete and should disappear within 2-4 hours

What to report to the hospice/palliative care team?
- Check the site twice a day. If you notice leaking, pain, redness, bruising, burning, or swelling at the site, report it to your nurse
- If the site becomes painful or redness and swelling persist for several hours, report it to your nurse.

Other HPNA Teaching Sheets on are available at www.HPNA.org.

Reference

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