

*“Just in Case”*

# Palliative Symptom Management Kits

Individualized in-home contingency medication kits for Home Health Clients with Palliative care needs.

Dear Pharmacist\*,

The Interior Health Palliative Care Team in (insert location) would like to introduce you to the “Just in Case” Symptom Management Kits.

As you may know, palliative care is a team sport. The palliative care team includes and relies on the support and assistance from pharmacists like yourself.

Please continue to read for more information about these “Just in Case” Symptom Management Kits and contact the individuals below, should you have any questions or concerns.

Warm regards,

The Palliative Care Team, (insert location).

## What is the “Just in Case” Symptom Management Kit?

This kit is designed as a contingency parenteral medication kit for Home Health clients with palliative performance scores (PPS) of 40% or less. This kit is implemented for anticipatory symptom management and is individualized to each client’s needs. Each kit will contain approximately 72 hours’ worth of parenteral medications.

This kit allows us to close the time gap between recognizing symptom distress requiring parenteral medications by having necessary medications readily accessible at home. The goal is to avoid unnecessary transfer or admission to Emergency or Hospital for symptom management.



**“We cannot change the outcome, but we can affect the journey.”**

Ann Richardson

## Why?

- To support Home Health clients at home when it is their Goal of Care, and avoid Emergency room visits.
- To decrease barriers and delays in symptom management.
- To have a backup or contingency medication plan. Not meant to replace regular prescriptions.
- To align parenteral medications options with the 2019 British Columbia Palliative Symptom Management Guidelines.
- To support best practice in home-based Palliative care.

## “Just in Case” Symptom Management Kits

### How do we screen for appropriate use and opioid diversion risk?

We consider having symptom management kits for palliative Home Health clients who have a PPS of 40% or less or are rapidly declining. The Home Health nursing team refers to a list of criteria to determine client eligibility and discusses the option of having these medications in home with the client and caregiver. If eligible, and the client and caregiver agree, a request is sent to the client's prescriber. If the prescriber agrees, a prescription (duplicate Rx for any opioids) will be sent to the client's local pharmacist.

We ask [five open-ended questions regarding storage of the kits and potential risk for misuse](#). If the kit becomes active, medication records are kept by the individual who activates the kit and the caregiver.

### Who can activate the kits?

Activation is initiated when there is a sudden onset of symptoms requiring the need to switch to parenteral medication delivery.

Activation of the kit must be completed by a Home Health nurse, physician, nurse practitioner or an advanced care paramedic. If there is not already a line insitu, this individual will initiate subcutaneous access, administer the initial dose, monitor the client for at least 30 minutes, conduct symptom severity assessments and provide further education to the caregiver. Home Health nursing will also be in contact before and upon activation to provide client and caregiver education.

Prefilled syringes will be drawn up, labelled and documented in a medication log by the activator. This provides accountability for the medication taken and used from the kit. Unused client medications will be returned to your pharmacy when no longer needed.

### What is your role as a pharmacist?

As a pharmacist, we ask that you receive and fill the necessary prescriptions on the “Just in Case” Symptom Management Kit prescription from the prescriber, providing all ampules together in a large, labelled (JIC SMK) plastic bag. Please collaborate with the local Home Health nurse as to who will insert the medication log into the bag.

Upon pick up or delivery of medication, we ask that you provide a copy of the [Palliative “Just in Case” Medication Kit Information](#) hand out and review with the client and caregiver.

Finally, we ask that you answer questions or concerns that the client or caregiver may have upon pick up or delivery of the kit.

## Important Contacts

### (Insert location) Home and Community Care Nursing Office

Tel: (---) 123-4567

### (Insert Main Contact), Palliative Care Liaison

Email: ----  
@interiorhealth.ca

Tel: (---) 123-4567

### Vicki Kennedy, CNS, Palliative End of Life Care

Email: vicki.kennedy  
@interiorhealth.ca

Tel: (250) 212-7807

### Elisabeth Antifeau, CNS, Palliative End of Life Care

Email: elisabeth.antifeau  
@interiorhealth.ca

Tel: (250) 354-2883

*\*Grateful acknowledgement of this pharmacy information bulletin is made to Katie Shortreed-Willett, BSN 4th year student, University of Northern BC for sharing her project work with Home Health Nursing across Interior Health.*

View the JIC SMK Toolkit support documents at:  
<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/sites/Partners/palliative/Pages/Clinical-Practice-Supports.aspx>