

**Policy for the use of oral/enteral syringes in the safer measurement and administration of liquid medicines via oral and other enteral routes in secondary care**

## Aim

To reduce the possibility of oral medication being administered via the parenteral route.

## Rationale

The use of intravenous syringes for the measurement and administration of oral medicines has resulted in inadvertent administration of oral medication via the parenteral route. The oral/enteral syringes stocked in this Trust\* (see Page 2) have different tips that are incompatible with IV equipment thus reducing the risk of this type of incident. The oral/enteral syringes are compatible with enteral feeding tubes and the purple plunger provides a visual reminder that the medication in the syringe must be administered via the enteral route.

## Policy

**IV syringes must never be used to measure or administer liquid oral medicines either orally or through an enteral feeding tube.**

A medicine cup or 5ml spoon is used to measure and administer liquid oral medication except in the following situations where an oral/enteral syringe is appropriate:

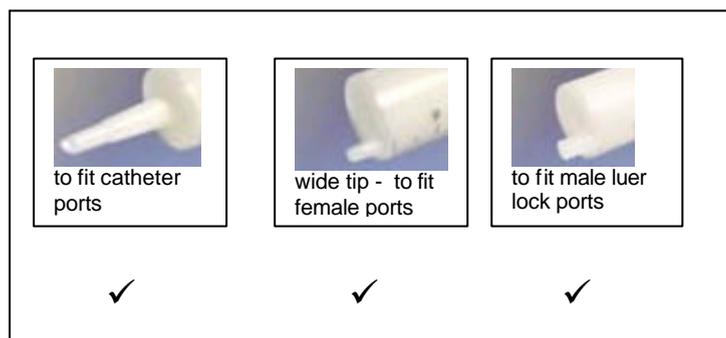
- The dose cannot be accurately measured using a medicine cup or 5ml spoon, i.e. the dose is not 5ml or a multiple of 5ml.
- Administration via an enteral feeding tube.
- Administration from a medicine cup or 5ml spoon is unsuitable e.g. babies and young children.

Where an oral/enteral syringe is used, it should have a purple plunger to aid differentiation from other syringes.

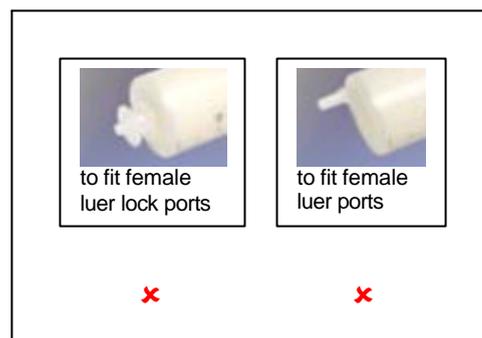
Oral/enteral purple syringes in sizes below 50ml are available with a wide tip that is incompatible with IV equipment.



\* 50ml oral/enteral purple syringes are available with a number of tips. Some of these are compatible with IV equipment – these syringes must not be stocked in the Trust and must not be ordered via the non-stock ordering process.



Oral/enteral syringes not compatible with IV equipment



Oral/enteral syringe compatible with IV equipment – **DO NOT USE**

1ml, 3ml, 5ml, 10ml, 20ml, 50ml oral/enteral syringes and 'press-in bungs' are available from [ *Trust to specify* ] and are latex free. Press-in bungs allow removal of the dose from a medicine bottle using an oral/enteral syringe with a wide tip.

CAUTION Smaller (less than 50ml) oral/enteral syringes exert a higher pressure, which can split the feeding tube. Oral/enteral syringes, particularly smaller oral/enteral syringes, must not be used to administer medicines until tube patency has been established, as per Trust policy.

In exceptional circumstances, where a non-standard enteral feeding tube, which is only compatible with IV equipment is in use, the oral/enteral syringe may require use of a red tip adaptor that makes the syringe compatible with IV equipment. Red tip adaptors are available from Pharmacy by special request only. They must be removed from use as soon as no longer required for a patient.

Oral/enteral syringes are available either sterile or non-sterile, according to Trust policy.

To avoid potential contamination of medication and cross infection, oral/enteral syringes are **single patient use only** .

Once an oral/enteral syringe has been used to administer medication to a patient, the **used oral/enteral syringe must not come into contact with an original container of medicine** again.

A patient may be taking more than one liquid medicine at the same time of day. Where each dose can be measured accurately using a medicine cup and the oral/enteral syringe is only required for administration, the same syringe can be used to draw up and administer each dose from a medicine cup, provided each dose is administered separately.

In hospital, **used oral/enteral syringes should be discarded after each episode of medicine administration**, according to the Trust waste disposal policy.

Following discharge, oral/enteral syringes may be reused by an individual patient in accordance with manufacturers' guidance for washing and re-use, with the exception of patients for whom it has been agreed that sterile equipment must always be used.

Adequate supplies of oral/enteral syringes must be supplied if required to administer the quantity of medication supplied on discharge or to out-patients.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff that supply or administer oral medicines must adhere to this policy.

## **Training**

This policy must be included in training programs for the administration and dispensing of medicines and management of enteral feeding tubes.