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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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Role: Respiratory Nurse Specialist
Date written: December 2010
Last revised: March 2016
Review date: March 2019
Version: 1.2
Code: PI0548

Nebulised Heparin (page 1 of 2)

Why have I started on nebulised heparin?

Normally you will have been started on heparin due to having thick retained secretions within your lungs. The heparin loosens the secretions which can make it easier for you to clear them from your lungs.

What is nebulisation?

The inhalation of medications (breathing into the lungs), such as heparin, is a very effective and quick method to deliver medication into the lungs and airways. It allows the treatment to be delivered exactly to where it is needed. The medication is nebulised using a compressor system.

The nebuliser creates a 'fine mist'. This is the medication which has been formed into microscopic small particles which can enter the lungs and reach the smaller airways.

Are there any risks or adverse effects?

You will have been given a test dose by the respiratory team before being given the medication to use at home. This involved being given a dose of the medication (normally 25,000 units/ml), with breathing tests before and after, to make sure that your lungs did not react adversely to the medication. The Respiratory Team will have checked for any reactions such as:

- Wheezy, tight chest – called bronchospasm.

How do I prepare the heparin?

- first wash your hands
- place the following on a clean surface:
 - * 2 glass ampoules of heparin
 - * 2ml syringe
 - * nebuliser chamber, mouthpiece and filter set.
- check that the glass ampoule of heparin is the prescribed dose and the 'use by' date is still 'in date'. The number of ampoules will depend on the dose as prescribed by your consultant.
- flick the glass ampoule to make sure that the heparin is at the bottom of it.
- break off the top of the glass ampoule using the dots on the glass ampoule as a guide. Place the top part into the sharps bin.

Respiratory Team
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- use the syringe to draw out the heparin and place it into the nebuliser chamber. Repeat this if required with another glass ampoule to make the prescribed dose.
- Start nebulising.

Where can I use the nebuliser?

Heparin can be nebulised anywhere; there are no precautions needed.

Is there anything I need to do while I have my nebuliser?

When nebulising we advise you to:

- sit in a good position, such as upright
- use a mouthpiece to avoid irritation to your eyes
- breathe at a relaxed, comfortable rate
- maintain a good seal with your lips whilst the nebuliser is running and
- do not talk whilst nebulising.

After nebulisation

Once nebulising has finished (the nebuliser either beeps or the solution remaining in the chamber starts to spit), you should stop the nebuliser and:

- put the heparin glass ampoule into the sharps bin.
- wash your hands.
- clean the nebuliser chamber, tubing and mouthpiece after each dose. Exactly how you clean your nebuliser will depend on what system you are using. Please refer to the advice you were given when you were given your nebuliser.

Some nebuliser circuits have a filter which will need changing, whereas other circuits do not. Depending on the type you have, you will be advised further by the Respiratory Team in clinic.

For how long do I need to have nebulised heparin?

This will vary from patient to patient, depending on the sputum and how easily it can be cleared. It will be discussed and prescribed by your consultant. If you are unsure please ask.

For further information

Please contact the Respiratory Team

Salisbury District Hospital, Odstock Road, Salisbury.

Telephone: 01722 429220