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PREAMBLE

Alberta Health Services (AHS) has updated its instructions for use of nitroglycerin for acute attacks of chest pain (angina). This change in use of nitroglycerin tablets or spray reflects the recommendations of the Canadian Cardiovascular Society and current literature. (*Can J Cardiol* Vol 20 No 11 September 2004)

PROTOCOL

The new instructions teach patients to call 911 (or their local emergency number) earlier for help, if they are not having relief from nitroglycerin. The following instructions are from the updated Med Teach (patient teaching) 'Nitroglycerin Sublingual Tablets and Spray' sheet:

"If you are having chest pain (angina) and your doctor has prescribed nitroglycerin, you should do the following in this order:

1. Stop what you are doing and sit down – sometimes rest can help relieve chest pain (angina).
2. Take one nitroglycerin sublingual tablet or spray. Wait 5 minutes.
3. If chest pain (angina) does not go away, take another nitroglycerin sublingual tablet or spray. Wait 5 minutes.
4. If you still have chest pain (angina), act quickly. Call 911 (or your local emergency number) for assistance or go to a hospital emergency department. Do not drive yourself.
5. After you call for emergency help, you can continue taking nitroglycerin sublingual tablets or sprays at 5 minute intervals, if needed. (Take exactly as recommended by your doctor.)"

Patients should contact medical assistance if they continue to have chest pain after taking 2 nitroglycerin sublingual tablets / sprays and a duration of 10 minutes has elapsed. The old instructions taught patients to seek medical help if they continued to have chest pain after taking 3 nitroglycerin sublingual tablets / sprays and duration of 15 minutes had elapsed.

The AHS Calgary Zonecardiology department is also updating all written patient teaching materials that contain nitroglycerin instructions for use. Translation Services will be working on translating the Med Teach information sheet into other common languages.

Since many health care providers teach patients how to use their nitroglycerin sublingual tablets and spray – it is **important to communicate this change to all staff** by email or at a staff meeting. Please find attached a poster outlining this change in practice. It would be appreciated if it could be posted around your unit (s) for all to see.

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Have you heard about the change in Nitroglycerin teaching instructions?



The Calgary Health Region (CHR) has updated its instructions for use of nitroglycerin for acute attacks of chest pain (angina). This change in use of nitroglycerin tablets or spray reflects the recommendations of the Canadian Cardiovascular Society and current literature. (*Can J Cardiol* Vol 20 No 11 September 2004)

The following instructions are from the updated Med Teach (patient teaching) 'Nitroglycerin Sublingual Tablets and Spray' sheet:

If you are having chest pain (angina) and your doctor has prescribed nitroglycerin, you should do the following in this order:

1. Stop what you are doing and sit down – sometimes rest can help relieve chest pain (angina).
2. Take one nitroglycerin sublingual tablet or spray. Wait 5 minutes.
3. If chest pain (angina) does not go away, take another nitroglycerin sublingual tablet or spray. Wait 5 minutes.
4. If you still have chest pain (angina), act quickly. Call 911 (or your local emergency number) for assistance or go to a hospital emergency department. Do not drive yourself.
5. After you call for emergency help, you can continue taking nitroglycerin sublingual tablets or sprays at 5 minute intervals, if needed. (Take exactly as recommended by your doctor.)

What has changed?

- New instructions teach patients to call for medical assistance earlier if not having relief of chest pain
- Patients should call 911 (or local emergency number) if still having chest pain after 2 nitroglycerin SL tablets or sprays and duration of 10 minutes has elapsed. The old instructions taught patients to call 911 after 3 nitroglycerin SL tablets or sprays and duration of 15 minutes of chest pain had elapsed.
- Updated written teaching materials are now available!

Ensure you know how to teach your patients to properly use their Nitroglycerin!



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