

# PHARMACY

Drug Information

## Morphine



### What is Morphine?

- Morphine belongs to a group of medicines called “opioids”. It is used to relieve severe pain and/or breathlessness. Morphine is usually started at a low dose and increased gradually to provide relief from pain and/or breathlessness.

### What are the Types of Morphine Available?

- There are three types of Morphine:

#### (i) Fast-acting Morphine:

- This is in liquid form. It starts to work within half to one hour of administration and may last for about four hours thereafter.
- If you need to administer liquid morphine a few times throughout the day to attain adequate relief of pain / breathlessness, your doctor may change it to a slow-release Morphine tablets to increase convenience.

#### (ii) Slow-acting Morphine:

- This is in a slow-release tablet form. The slow release action allows the medicine to stay in the body longer, up to twelve hours. It comes in 10mg (brown colour) and 30 mg (purple colour) and can be given 2 to 3 times a day.
- Do not cut/crush slow-release tablets. Swallow the tablet whole.

#### (iii) Morphine injections:

- The injectable form of morphine is commonly given under the skin (subcutaneous) or into the vein (intravenous) via a syringe or a portable pump called the syringe driver or infusion pump. The administration of morphine injections should be under the instruction and supervision of a healthcare professional.

## How is Morphine Administered / Taken?

### (i) Regular doses

- Regular doses are used to control pain and/or breathlessness which are **persistent and constant**. They are taken “round-the-clock” to prevent the symptoms from recurring. Take the regular doses after meals. Do not omit any dose even when you are not in pain.
- If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, take only the usual dose. Do not double the dosage.

### (ii) Breakthrough doses

- Pain/breathlessness may still be experienced while taking a regular dosing of morphine. This is called “breakthrough pain/breathlessness”.
- On top of regular doses of morphine, the doctor might prescribe additional doses of morphine to address the breakthrough pain.
- Keep track of the number of breakthrough doses that you have administered and inform your doctor. The doctor may need to increase your regular dose.

## Can Morphine be Administered / Taken With Other Medications?

- Morphine works for certain types of pain only. Depending on your condition, it may be necessary to take morphine together with other painkillers that your doctor has prescribed for you.
- Please inform your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medications, including supplements, traditional or herbal remedies.

## What are the Important Side Effects of Morphine?

- Like all other medicines, morphine has side effects. Some of these side effects may get better over time while others last longer. You can also speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist on ways to manage these side effects. Below are commonly reported side effects.

Side Effect	Management
Constipation	You may be prescribed laxatives to be taken together with morphine, to prevent constipation. It is important that you take your laxatives regularly to prevent this condition, which might otherwise be hard to reverse.  If you find that you have trouble passing stools despite regular intake of laxatives, please inform your doctor or pharmacist.
Nausea, vomiting	Take morphine after meals.  Nausea and vomiting usually improves after a few days. If you are troubled by this side effect, your doctor may prescribe some medicine for you.
Drowsiness	Do not drive or operate dangerous machinery.  Drowsiness can be transient and last for a few days after starting morphine or when the dose is increased. If you experience persistent or excessive drowsiness, please inform your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

- Some other less common side effects of morphine include itch, dry mouth and sweating.

If you develop rashes, facial swelling or shortness of breath after taking the medication, you could be allergic to the medication. Please seek medical attention immediately.

### **Are There any Special Precautions That I Need to Take?**

- It is important to inform your doctor if you intend to conceive or breastfeed while taking this medication.
- Never share your medicine with others. Morphine is a strong pain-killer and should only be used under medical supervision.

### **Will I Become Addicted to Morphine?**

- There is no evidence that morphine causes addiction when it is used as directed by doctors, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals.

### **How do I Store Morphine?**

- Store your medication in a cool, dry place away from heat, moisture and direct sunlight.

### **How Do I Dispose Unused / Expired Morphine Properly?**

- You should return any unused/expired morphine back to pharmacy and they will help you to dispose them safely. Make sure that the medications are labelled with the following:
  - Name and NRIC of the patient (if known)
  - Name and strength of morphine
  - Reason for disposal
- For proper disposal of morphine injections, discard the used ampoule and syringe with the needle into a puncture-proof container.

If you have any problem with your treatment, please contact your doctor, pharmacist or nurse clinician.

Please keep all medications out of reach of children.

