

Pharmacy Department

## Morphine for Pain

Information for parents and carers

### Introduction

This leaflet is about the use of morphine to reduce moderate to severe pain. This might be pain from an injury, after an operation or due to an illness.

### Why is it important for my child to take this medicine?

Morphine will help your child to feel less pain.

### When should I give morphine?

- If your child needs help with pain relief day and night for several days, give a dose of morphine every 6 hours to help stop the pain coming back.
- If your child has pain that comes and goes, give a dose of morphine when they first complain of pain. **Wait at least 4 hours** before giving another dose.
- **You must not give your child more than four doses of morphine in 24 hours, so you may have to wait up to 6 hours between doses.**
- Write down the time that you give each dose, to help you remember.
- **Do not give extra doses of morphine, as this can be dangerous.**

### How much should I give?

Your doctor will work out the amount of morphine (the dose) that is right for *your* child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label.



**It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions about how much to give.**

### How should I give it?

**Liquid medicine:** measure out the right amount using a marked oral syringe. You should get these from your pharmacist. Do not use a kitchen teaspoon as it will not give the right amount.

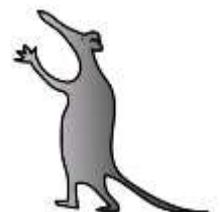
**Tablets** should be swallowed with a glass of water, milk or juice. Your child should not chew the tablet.

### When should the medicine start working?

Your child should start to feel less pain about 30 minutes after taking morphine. It may take up to an hour for the morphine to work properly.

### What if my child is sick (vomits)?

- If your child is sick after having a dose of morphine, **do not repeat the dose.**
- Wait at least 4 hours before giving any more morphine.



### What if I forget to give it?

If your child is in pain, give the missed dose as soon as you remember. Then you must wait at least 4 hours **before** giving any more.

## What if I give too much?

 **It can be dangerous to give too much morphine.**

The box below lists some of the symptoms that your child may get if they have had too much morphine.

However, your child may not necessarily show any of these symptoms - therefore if there is any possibility that your child may have had too much morphine, contact your doctor or take your child to hospital straight away. Take the medicine container or pack with you, even if it is empty. This will be useful to the doctor.

Symptoms resulting from having too much morphine include:

- Pupils of the eyes (the black circles in the centre) becoming very small.
- Difficulty breathing or breathing more slowly.
- Feeling faint or sleepy.
- Racing heart rate.



If your child starts to show any of the following symptoms, or you are at all worried that your child may have had too much morphine, contact your doctor or take your child to hospital.

**999** If your child seems very sleepy, or they have problems with their breathing, or stop breathing, phone for an ambulance **straight away**.

## Are there any possible side effects?

We use medicine to make our children better, but sometimes they have other effects that we don't want (side-effects).

### Side-effects you need to know about

- Your child may feel sick or be sick after taking morphine.
- Your child may get constipation (have difficulty doing a poo). You can help by giving your child plenty to drink while they are taking morphine. Your doctor may also suggest that you give them a laxative - a medicine that will help them go to the toilet. It is important that your child doesn't strain on the toilet.
- Your child may get headaches, have a dry mouth, or sweat, and their skin may flush (go red).
- They may have changes in mood, sleep disturbances, or feel dizzy or light-headed when they stand up.
- Your child may find it difficult to pass urine (do a wee). Contact your doctor if this happens.
- Children taking high doses of morphine may develop shaking or muscle cramps (myoclonus). Contact your doctor if this happens.

### Side-effects you must do something about

**999** If your child has difficulty breathing, stops breathing, or seems very sleepy, phone an ambulance **straight away**.

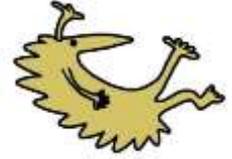
## Can other medicines be given at the same time as morphine?

 Some painkillers and cough medicines contain codeine or dihydrocodeine (you can find this information on the label). **Do not** give these to your child.

- You can give your child medicines that contain paracetamol or ibuprofen, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist **before** giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal or complementary medicines.

## Is there anything else I need to know about this medicine?

- You may have heard that some people can become addicted to morphine or dependent on it. This is unlikely to happen when morphine is given to children in pain for short periods of time.
- An antidote can be given to someone who has had too much morphine. This has to be done in hospital.
- The liquid medicine contains a small amount of sugar and ethanol (alcohol).



## General advice about medicines

- If you are not sure the medicine is working, contact your doctor.

 **Do not give extra doses of morphine.**

- Only give morphine to *your* child. Never give it to anyone else, even if their condition appears to be the same, as you could do them harm.

 If you think someone else may have taken the medicines by accident, contact your doctor straight away. If they show any of the symptoms listed above, take them to hospital straight away.

- Write down the times you give morphine, to help you to remember, and to make sure you do not give too much.
- Give out-of-date or unused medicines to your pharmacist to dispose of.

## Where should I keep this medicine?

- Keep the medicine in a cupboard, away from heat and direct sunlight. It does not need to be kept in the fridge.
- Make sure that children cannot see or reach the medicine.
- Keep the medicine in the container it came in.

## Who to contact for more information

Your doctor or pharmacist will be able to give you more information about morphine and other medicines used to treat pain.

If you have any questions about your medication, please do not hesitate to ask one of the Pharmacy team, alternatively you can telephone us on 0151 252 5311.

*Adapted from Medicines for Children 'Morphine for pain' information leaflet for parents and carers v2 (Jun 2014 - Reviewed Jun 2017)*

This leaflet only gives general information. You must always discuss the individual treatment of your child with the appropriate member of staff. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about your child's treatment.

This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested.

Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust  
Alder Hey  
Eaton Road  
Liverpool  
L12 2AP

Tel: 0151 228 4811  
[www.alderhey.nhs.uk](http://www.alderhey.nhs.uk)

