

What are Opioids and Morphine?



- Opioids are prescribed to control pain, breathlessness and cough
- They come in different formulations such as liquid, tablets, patches and injections.
- Commonly used opioids: Codeine, Tramadol, Morphine, Fentanyl and Oxycodone
- Morphine is the gold standard in treating cancer pain
- Morphine starts working quickly and achieve maximum effect after 1 hour (oral) and effects wear off after about 4 hours.

Common Fears about Opioids

Does opioid speed up death?

- ✓ Opioids, if used correctly, do not shorten your life span.
- ✓ Research has found that palliative patients receiving morphine lived longer due to optimized comfort and improve quality of life.



Will the effects wear off over time? Does it mean I will need more opioid in the future?

- ✓ The pain-relief effects of opioid do not wear off over time. The right dose of opioids is the dose that relieves the pain or breathlessness with minimal or tolerable side effects.
- ✓ If your pain gets worse due to disease progression, you may need a higher dose of opioid. There is no maximum dose that can be taken.
- ✓ This also means, if your pain gets better due to intervention or treatment, your doctor will reduce the dose.



Will opioids mask my pain and condition?

- ✓ Good pain control does not mask your condition.
- ✓ Besides pain, there are other symptoms and investigations that are more reliable in assessing your condition.



Does taking opioids means death is approaching?

- ✓ No, this is not true. Opioid is widely used to control severe pain, not only by those who are very ill but also those who can still lead an everyday life.
- ✓ Treatment with opioid may be necessary to allow you to go about your daily activities comfortably and enjoy a good quality of life.



Should I only take opioid only when I can't stand the pain anymore?

- ✓ Some people think that pain is an inevitable part of illness and will wait until their pain reaches an intolerable level before doing something about it.
- ✓ In fact, pain is more effectively managed sooner rather than later.

Common Side Effects

❖ Side effects can be treated

Constipation

Opioids are usually given with laxatives to prevent or relieve constipation.



Dry mouth

Sip water or suck on ice chips throughout the day.

Use oral spray to keep mouth moisture.

suck on candy or sour food.

Nausea and vomiting (temporary)

Take your doses after a meal.

Drowsiness/dizziness (temporary)

Do not drive and do not use tools or machines.

How to take Opioid

- ✓ Do not exceed the dose prescribed by your doctor.
- ✓ Do not take a double dose to makeup for a missed dose.
- ✓ Additional doses of opioid can be taken in between the fixed timings if you have sudden pain (breakthrough pain).
- ✓ Remember to wait at least 1 hour from your last dose to take an additional dose.
- ✓ Record the number of additional doses you have taken for the day and inform your doctor at the next visit.

