

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 achieves 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 improved quality of life.



Will taking opioid lead to addiction?

- ✓ Opioids, if used as instructed by your medical team, will not result in addiction.

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.



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.



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.



Does taking opioids mean 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.



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 make up 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.

