

Morphine for pain relief

Why does my child need to take Morphine?

Morphine is a painkiller used for moderate to severe pain that is not relieved by Paracetamol alone.

Previously, children may have been given Codeine as a pain medication. However, in June 2013, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) in the UK advised that children under the age of 12 should not be given Codeine.

How do I give Morphine?

Morphine comes as a liquid medication (oral Morphine solution or Oramorph[®]) and as a tablet (Sevredol[®]). These are quick acting preparations of Morphine.

How much should I give?

The correct dose, volume and frequency to give will be prescribed by your doctor. Your doctor may subsequently adjust the dose depending on how well your child's pain is responding.

When should I give Morphine?

If your child has been prescribed Morphine, you can give a dose when they complain of pain.

The Morphine should begin to work 30 minutes after it is given and the effect should last 2-4 hours.

If your child is sick less than 15 minutes after having a dose of Morphine, give them the same dose again.

If your child is sick more than 15 minutes after taking a dose, you do not need to give another dose. Wait until the next dose is due. The Morphine dose can be repeated 4 hours after the previous dose.

What if the Morphine is not working?

If your child is not getting sufficient pain relief, if the pain returns quickly, if the pain is getting worse or if your child complains of a new pain, please seek medical advice.

What if I give too much?

Morphine is a good painkilling medicine as long as it is used as directed, but it can be harmful to give your child too much in a short space of time. Any medication can have undesirable effects, but when used appropriately to treat acute pain, children will not become addicted to Morphine, become dependent on it, nor will it shorten a person's life.

Act immediately if:

- You think you may have given your child too much Morphine. Contact your hospital straight away.
- Your child has difficulty breathing, has slow breathing, stops breathing or cannot be woken, phone for an ambulance straight away. Take the medication to hospital with you as this will be useful to the doctor assessing your child.

Other common side effects

- Constipation. Your child may open his/her bowels less frequently and stools may become harder. You can help by giving your child plenty to drink. Your doctor can also prescribe laxatives. Your child will be more comfortable if they do not have to strain on the toilet.
- Nausea and vomiting. Some children may feel sick or be sick the first few times they take morphine. This usually passes but please let your doctor or nurse know as the dose may be reduced or your child could have an anti-sickness medication.
- Mild drowsiness. Your child may seem more sleepy than usual when they initially start on Morphine. Please contact your hospital as the dose of the Morphine may need to be reduced.

Safe storage and safety advice

- Keep the medication 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 it.
- Keep the medication in the container it came in as this will indicate the dosing information.
- Only give Morphine to the child it was prescribed for. Never give it to anyone else, even if their condition or pain appears to be the same, as this can have serious harmful effects.
- If you think someone else may have taken the medication by accident, seek medical advice immediately.
- When no longer needed, give the medicine to your pharmacist to dispose of.
- Codeine and Morphine are in the same family of medicines. If your child is aged over 12 years, you should not give Codeine (or cough medicines which contain Codeine) whilst taking Morphine.

If your child has ongoing pain, he/she should be followed up by their hospital consultant who will give you a further prescription if appropriate.

If you need further information or advice, please contact your shared care hospital's children's ward.