

What Is Morphine and Why Is It Prescribed?

Morphine is an opioid medication used in hospice to relieve and reduce symptoms of pain, shortness of breath, cough, or chest pain. This medication can be prescribed in oral liquid, tablet, or injectable forms, and is also available as either a short-acting or a long-acting medication. What this means is that the short-acting medication is used for immediate relief of symptoms, while the long-acting medication is used to manage chronic symptoms.

Why Did My Medical Provider Order Two Different Forms Of Morphine?

Long-acting/extended-release morphine is not effective in treating a sudden episode of pain or shortness of breath because it is a time-released medication. Short-acting Morphine may still need to be used to manage urgent and/or breakthrough pain or shortness of breath symptoms.

What Are Common Side Effects Of Morphine?

- **Drowsiness & Fatigue:** This side effect may occur initially and is usually temporary, subsiding a few days after your body adjusts to the medication.
- **Constipation:** Opioid-Induced-Constipation is common. To reduce the risk of this symptom, HopeWest will start a bowel medication to be taken while using Morphine. If you still experience constipation while using morphine and a bowel medication, tell your nurse.
- **Nausea:** This side effect may initially occur, but tends to wear off after a few days of taking the medication. Taking our medication with a light snack may help reduce nausea symptoms.
- **Dizziness:** To reduce your risk of falls, change position slowly when getting up. If this symptom persists, tell your nurse.

How Do I Take This Medication?

- Be sure to follow the directions given by your medical provider. Never use Morphine in larger amounts than prescribed.
- When using long-acting tablets, be sure to take according to the timed increments as prescribed. For example, if the directions say, "Take every 12 hours", take your medication at a 12-hour interval that works for your schedule such as 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. NEVER crush or chew long-acting tablets.
- A HopeWest nurse will teach you or your caregiver how to safely measure liquid medication. Oral liquid doses can be administered under the tongue or against the cheek for ease of swallowing.

What This Medication Will Not Do When Taken As Prescribed:

- When taking Morphine as prescribed, this medication will not hasten death and it will not cause addiction.
- As your disease progresses, your body may develop a tolerance to this medication and you may require an increase in your dosage to effectively treat symptoms.

Contact HopeWest at any time for assistance or if you have additional questions.
A Registered Nurse is available 24/7 including after hours, weekends, and holidays.