

Medicines for Children: information for parents and carers

Morphine for pain



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.

This leaflet has been written specifically for parents and carers about the use of this medicine in children. The information may differ from that provided by the manufacturer. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

Do not give extra doses of morphine, as this can be dangerous. Do not stop giving morphine suddenly.

Name of drug

Morphine

Common brands: Oramorph®, Sevredol®, MST Continus®, Zomorph®, Morphgesic SR®, MXL®

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

Morphine will help to control your child's pain.

What is morphine available as?


- Tablets (10 mg, 20 mg, 50 mg) – these may contain lactose
- Sustained-release tablets/capsules (available in a range of doses from 5 to 200 mg)
- Liquid medicine (2 or 20 mg per mL) – this contains a small amount of sugar and ethanol (alcohol)
- Granules (20 mg, 30 mg, 60 mg, 100 mg or 200 mg per sachet)
- Suppositories (5 mg, 10 mg, 15 mg, 20 mg, 30 mg)

When should I give morphine?

- You should give morphine regularly to keep your child's pain under control. This is every 12 hours for sustained-release morphine or every 4 hours for other forms of morphine.
- If your child has pain that comes and goes, give them a dose of morphine when they first complain of pain.
- The packaging will tell you which type of morphine you have and how often you can give it. If you are not sure, check with your doctor or pharmacist first.
- Write down the time that you give each dose, to help you remember.

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 morphine?



Tablets/capsules should be swallowed with a glass of water, juice or similar. Your child should not chew the tablets or capsules.



Granules: Sprinkle or stir the granules into a small amount of soft food (e.g. yogurt) or a small drink. Your child should then swallow the food or drink straight away, without chewing. Make sure that they take it all.



Liquid medicine: Measure out the right amount using a medicine spoon or oral syringe. You can get these from your pharmacist. Do not use a kitchen teaspoon as it will not give the right amount.



Suppositories:

- Wash your hands with soap and hot water.
- Unwrap the suppository.
- Your child should be lying on his or her side or front.
- Hold one buttock gently to one side so that you can see the back passage.
- Hold the suppository with the rounded end close to the back passage.
- Use one finger to push the suppository gently into the back passage. It needs to go in by about 2 cm.
- Your child should stay lying down for about 15 minutes so that the suppository doesn't come out.
- Wash your hands again with soap and hot water.

If your child empties their bowels (does a poo) within 30 minutes of inserting a suppository, you will need to insert another one.

When will the medicine start working?

- Your child should start to feel less pain within an hour of taking the first dose of morphine.
- It will take up to 12 hours for the first dose of a sustained-release preparation to work properly. Your child will be given other pain relief for this time.
- After this, giving morphine regularly should keep your child's pain under control. If it doesn't, contact your doctor or pharmacist. **Do not** give extra doses of morphine.

What if my child is sick (vomits)?

Children are often sick or feel sick for the first few days of taking morphine. Your doctor may prescribe another medicine to help with this.

Tablets, capsules, granules or liquid medicine

- If your child is sick less than 30 minutes after having a dose of morphine, give them the same dose again.
- If your child is sick more than 30 minutes after taking a dose, you **do not** need to give another dose. Wait until the next normal dose.


Suppositories


- If your child is sick at any time, you do not need to give them another dose, as the suppository will still work.

What if I forget to give it?

- Don't worry if you forget a dose, as morphine stays in the body for a while and will continue to work.
- Give the missed dose when you remember. After that, give the next dose after the usual number of hours (12 hours for sustained-release tablets/capsules and granules; 4 hours for other forms).

What if I give too much?


 It can be dangerous to give your child too much morphine. If you think you may have given your child too much, contact your doctor **straight away**.

 If your child seems very sleepy, or if they have problems with their breathing, or stop breathing, your child may have had too much morphine. Phone for an ambulance straight away. Take the medicine container or pack with you, even if it is empty. This will be useful to the doctor.

Are there any possible side-effects?

We use medicines to make our children feel better, but sometimes they cause effects that we don't want (side-effects).


Side-effects that you must do something about


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

Other side-effects that you need to know about

- Your child is likely to feel sick or be sick (vomit) for the first few days of taking morphine. Your doctor may prescribe another medicine to help with this.
- Most children get constipation (have difficulty doing a poo) when taking morphine. You can help by giving your child plenty to drink. Your doctor will probably suggest that your child also takes laxatives – medicines 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. They may feel dizzy, and they may feel 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 cramps in the large muscles of the body (myoclonus). Contact your doctor if this happens.


Can other common 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.

 Morphine should not be taken with some common drugs that you get on prescription. It is important to tell your doctor *and* pharmacist that your child is taking morphine.


- 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?

 Do not stop giving morphine suddenly, as your child may get withdrawal symptoms and their pain may come back. As your child's pain improves, or if they need to stop taking morphine, your doctor will reduce the dose a bit at a time.

- You may have heard that some people become addicted to morphine or dependent on it. This is unlikely to happen when morphine is given to children in pain.
- Morphine is often given to children and adults with life-threatening or terminal illnesses. Morphine **does not** shorten the person's life.
- An antidote can be given to someone who has had too much morphine. This has to be done in hospital.

General advice

- If the morphine does not seem to be helping your child's pain, contact your doctor for advice. **Do not** give extra doses of morphine.
 - Only give this medicine to *your* child. Never give it to anyone else, even if they seem to have the same condition, as you are likely to do them harm.
-  If you think someone else may have taken morphine by accident, contact your doctor straight away, or take the person to hospital.
- Write down the times that you give morphine, to help you remember, and to make sure that you don't give too much.
 - Make sure that you always have enough medicine. Remember to order a new prescription at least 2 weeks before you will run out.
 - Make sure that the medicine is not older than the 'use by' date on the packaging.
 - Give any old or unused morphine to your pharmacist to dispose of.

Where should I keep this medicine?

- Keep all medicines where children cannot see or reach them.
- Keep this medicine somewhere cool and dry, away from direct heat and light. It does not need to be kept in the fridge.
- 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 drugs or methods for pain relief.

You can also get more information from NHS Direct (0845 4647, www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk).

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk



Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

WellChild
the national charity for sick children

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We have written this leaflet to help you understand more about the medicine you are giving to your child. We take great care to make sure that the information is correct and up-to-date. However, medicines can be used in different ways for different patients. It is therefore important that you follow the advice of your doctor or pharmacist, as they understand your child's illness. If you are not sure about something, ask your doctor or pharmacist. Note that this leaflet applies to the use of medicines in the UK; it may not apply in other countries. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), The Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG), WellChild and the contributors and editors cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of information, omissions of information, or any actions that may be taken as a consequence of reading the leaflet.