

Morphine sulphate oral solution

Respiratory Medicine - For the relief of breathlessness

Information for patients

This leaflet is for patients with respiratory conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and pulmonary fibrosis who experience breathlessness.

What is morphine sulphate oral solution?

Morphine sulphate oral solution (sometimes known as Oramorph®) is liquid morphine that is taken by mouth. It is usually prescribed for pain but at low doses, it has been shown to be effective in reducing breathlessness. It can be used either short term or long term.

You may notice that the medicine information leaflet includes a warning not to take morphine if you have a breathing problem. However, this does not apply when taken at low doses under the supervision of the respiratory team.

How to take morphine sulphate oral solution

This medicine should be taken as prescribed for you, following the information on the medicine label.

Most people will be prescribed morphine sulphate oral solution at the strength of 10mg in 5ml. The usual dose for treating breathlessness is either 1.25ml or 2.5ml of liquid. These doses can be measured using a spoon or a small syringe.

The effects of morphine sulphate oral solution usually last around 4 hours. It can be taken regularly or when required and your prescriber will advise you on how often this can be taken.

Morphine sulphate oral solution takes 15-20 minutes to work and to reduce breathlessness. It can be taken after symptoms occur or 15-20 minutes before an activity known to cause breathlessness as a way of helping prevent symptoms e.g. before washing or dressing.

What are the most common side effects?

As with all medicines, there is a potential risk of side effects. However not everyone will experience them.

Sleepiness: The most common side effect of morphine sulphate oral solution is drowsiness. If you are on other medicines which also cause drowsiness then you should discuss this with your GP or respiratory team before starting morphine sulphate oral solution. This side effect is most likely to occur at the beginning of treatment or after a dose increase and should improve after a few days.

Constipation: This is a common side effect. It is important to drink plenty of fluids and eat a balanced diet to maintain regular bowel movements. Some people may require a laxative.

Sickness: If this occurs, try taking morphine sulphate oral solution with food. This side effect is most likely to occur at the beginning of treatment or after a dose increase and should improve after a few days.

Skin itching: This side effect generally goes away over time. If it is persistent, please discuss with your GP or Respiratory team.

Can I get addicted to morphine sulphate oral solution?

The doses used for breathlessness are low and unlikely to become addictive. Please speak to your GP or respiratory team if you have any concerns.

Driving

You can drive but we recommend not to drive when you first start taking morphine sulphate oral solution, until it is clear how drowsy it will make you feel. Do not drive any vehicle, operate machinery or ride a bike if you feel drowsy, have blurred vision or are unable to concentrate.

Alcohol

Drinking alcohol when taking morphine sulphate oral solution may increase drowsiness. You should only drink alcohol in moderation whilst taking morphine sulphate oral solution. It is important to not exceed the recommended limits.

Further information

If you have any other questions about using morphine sulphate oral solution for breathlessness, please do not hesitate to contact your GP or respiratory team.

See below for more information or call **NHS 24 on 111** for non emergency medical advice.

Useful resources

NHS Inform website

Scottish health information you can trust

<https://www.nhsinform.scot>

Shortness of breath

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/lungs-and-airways/shortness-of-breath>

Asthma + Lung, UK

<https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk>

How can I manage my breathlessness?

<https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/symptoms-tests-treatments/symptoms/breathlessness/how-can-i-manage-my-breathlessness>

Contact details

Respiratory team	Telephone number