

Additional Notes

Liquid opioids for acute pain relief

The Royal Bournemouth Hospital,
Castle Lane East, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH7 7DW

Poole Hospital,
Longfleet Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 2JB

Christchurch Hospital,
Fairmile Road, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 2JX

Author: **Lenka Dowdell** Date: **April 2023** Version: **One**
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You have been given this information leaflet because you have been prescribed either:

- Morphine sulphate solution 10mg in 5ml
- Oxycodone liquid 5mg in 5ml

Opioids are 'morphine-type' medications used to treat acute moderate to severe pain when other painkillers do not relieve this pain alone. They are also used to treat breathlessness in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Opioids are often used with other painkillers which work together to give better pain relief. You have been given (or advised to take) painkillers e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen or naproxen, which should be taken regularly and supplemented with opioid medicine as needed to help manage pain better.

Continue to take your other regular medication as prescribed.

Do NOT take larger doses or take more frequently than advised on the label.

Do NOT start taking additional painkillers that contain codeine (such as Nurofen Plus[®], co-codamol, Solpadeine[®]), dihydrocodeine or tramadol, unless advised by your doctor. You will be more likely to get side effects.

Do NOT drink alcohol when taking opioids as this can make you sleepier than usual.

Each 5ml dose of morphine solution contains 0.4ml (8%) of alcohol which may be harmful if you suffer from alcoholism, are pregnant or breast-feeding (use as little as possible), have long-term (chronic) liver problems, epilepsy, or if you are a child. Discuss any concerns with your GP.

Do NOT start taking additional medicines to help you sleep, such as benzodiazepines (e.g. diazepam, lorazepam, temazepam, zopiclone), unless advised by your doctor. These medicines increase the risk of sedation (sleepiness).

Do NOT take the medicine if you have previously had an allergic reaction to it or any of the ingredients.

Do NOT flush unused medicines down the toilet or throw them away (to protect our environment). Always return any unused medication back to your local pharmacy for safe disposal.

What should I do if my pain does not improve?

You should not need to take this medicine for longer than a week. Long term use can increase the risk of addiction. If you feel that your medication is not working, or you are still in pain after the prescribed course, please contact your GP for advice. It is important that you do not take more than you need.

Are there any side effects?

Feeling sick (nausea), or vomiting

- Taking opioids with or after a snack or meal may help you stop feeling sick.
- If you are sick, take frequent sips of water to avoid dehydration.

Constipation

- Drinking plenty of water and increasing the amount of fibre in your diet from fruit, vegetables, and cereals will help prevent this.
- You may need a laxative to help with constipation.

Feeling sleepy (drowsiness) or tired, and dizzy

- This is common. If affected, do not drive, do not attempt to complete complex tasks such as using tools and machinery, or even boiling a kettle.
- If you feel dizzy, sit or lie down until you feel better.
- Drowsiness (or sedation) can be an indication that you have taken too much opioid. Make sure your family or carer is aware of the need to follow the advice below should sedation become a problem.

Awake and alert	Mildly sedated and easy to rouse
No action is required	No action is required
Frequently sleepy, drowsy on waking but will follow commands or unable to remain awake	
Contact your GP or phone 111 for advice	
Difficult to rouse or unrousable, OR unable to, or finding it difficult, to follow commands	
Phone 999	

Dry mouth

- Taking frequent sips of water and drinking plenty of it regularly during the day will help.

Itchy skin

- Taking an antihistamine may help soothe any itching, but you should speak to your GP or pharmacist for advice first.

Contact your GP or phone **111** if you are concerned about any side effects or if they don't go away.

Important information about taking liquid opioids:

Use in pregnancy:

Ensure your midwifery team is aware and use is reviewed regularly. Take regular paracetamol and only use opioids if needed.

Use in breastfeeding:

Opiates are present in small amounts in breast milk. Take regular paracetamol and ibuprofen (if tolerated) and only take the liquid opioid if needed. Use the lowest effective dose of opioids possible to manage the pain and stop taking as soon as pain becomes more manageable (usually 3 days in total). Monitor infants for drowsiness, feeding difficulties, constipation, respiratory problems, and developmental milestones.

Keep all medication out of reach of children.

How to take opioids?

Dose:

For moderate to severe pain, opioid solution is given in small doses between 1.25ml and 10ml, up to every four hours when required. Check the label on your medicine for the dose you should take. As your body heals, you will need fewer doses to help manage your pain.

The opioid solution works quickly - it should take 15-30 minutes to get pain relief that lasts around four hours. Always read the directions on the label and listen to advice given by your doctor.

How to measure:

Always use the oral purple syringe OR measuring medicine spoon provided to measure your dose accurately (wash after each use with warm soapy water, rinse and leave to dry).

Food:

Opioids can be taken with or without food. Some preparations may contain up to 2.25g of sugar in each 5ml dose.