Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand
Waitaha Canterbury

MORPHINE (for breathlessness)

mor-feen

What does it do?

Morphine is used to reduce breathlessness and cough.

For information on *morphine* for pain relief see *Morphine* (long acting) or *Morphine* (short acting).

Before you start

- Tell your doctor if you have bowel or kidney problems, sleep apnoea, if you have ever had a seizure, or have had a recent head injury.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.

How should you take it?

Take *morphine* as directed with a glass of non-alcoholic drink. You can take it with or without food.
Liquid: Measure carefully with an oral syringe or measuring spoon. Leave at least four hours between doses. It takes at least 20 minutes to start working. Try taking it before activities that you know make you breathless like showering, or before you go out.
Slow-release tablet or capsule: Swallow whole – do not crush or chew.

Your dose is: _____ Date: _____

What if you forget a dose?

If you are taking *morphine* regularly for your breathlessness, and it is nearly time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take your next dose at the usual time. Otherwise, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. Do not take two doses at the same time.

If you are only taking it when you need it for breathlessness, then you don't need to take it.

Can you take other medicines?

Tell your pharmacist or doctor about all medicines or treatments that you may be taking, including vitamins, herbal products or recreational drugs.

What side effects might you notice?

The doses used for breathlessness are much smaller than those used for pain, so the side effects are usually minimal. Side effects that can happen with *morphine* used in doses for pain relief are listed below.

Side Effects	Recommended action
Slow or shallow breathing, hard to wake up Seizures	Tell your doctor immediately
Confusion, mood changes Seeing, hearing or feeling things that aren't really there Tummy pain (new or getting worse)	Tell your doctor
Constipation	Take your prescribed laxatives. Tell your doctor
Drowsiness, dizziness Nausea, vomiting, dry mouth or throat Itching, flushing, sweating Strange or uncontrolled movements	Tell your doctor if troublesome

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

Other information:

- The small amount of *morphine* used to treat breathlessness isn't likely to cause addiction if you haven't had problems with addiction before.
- *Morphine* can impair your ability to do tasks such as driving or using machines. Alcohol makes this worse. Discuss your risk with your health professional. (search NZTA - Are you safe to drive?)