Morphine gel for painful skin ulcers

This information leaflet aims to answer your questions about using morphine gel to treat your painful skin ulcers. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is morphine gel?
Morphine is a strong painkiller. It is usually taken as a tablet or injected into a vein. However, you can also apply it in a gel. This means you put it directly onto a painful area, such as an ulcer on your skin. The gel may be used alone or with other painkillers you may be taking.

After the gel has been applied, the morphine will be absorbed into the area and may help to relieve your pain. Most people get some pain relief after the first application.

Medicine – Taking an unlicensed medicine
Most new medicines are tested to make sure they are not harmful. This is known as licensing. Morphine is used in other forms, for example, tablets and injections, but has not been licensed for use in this particular gel, so it is known as an unlicensed medicine.

The leaflet, Unlicensed medicines – a guide for patients, has more information about unlicensed medicines. If you would like a copy, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist, or you can call the pharmacy medicines helpline – contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

How do I use the gel?
Usually, your nurse will put the gel on for you when they are changing the dressings on your ulcer. A thin layer of gel is put on the painful areas of the ulcer, usually around the edges. Your normal dressings are then placed on top to hold the gel in place.

It may be possible for you, a friend or family member to put the gel on. Ask your nurse to see if this is possible.

How long you need to use the gel for will vary, depending on what is causing your ulcer. Your doctor will discuss this with you.

Are there any side effects?
You are less likely to get side effects from morphine gel than you are from morphine tablets or injections. This is because morphine gel is applied directly to your skin, so you absorb very little of it into your body.
However, everyone is different. When morphine is taken by mouth or injection, can cause drowsiness (sleepiness), nausea (feeling sick), or a feeling that your reactions are slower than usual. If you feel any of these side effects, tell your doctor or nurse immediately, although it is very unlikely to be caused by the morphine gel.

Side effects may be worse if you are using other medicines that cause drowsiness – ask your pharmacist which medicines can cause this.

Any drowsiness you may experience can be worsened if you drink alcohol at the same time. If you experience any other side effects or your skin appears worse please let your doctor or nurse know.

**Can I drink alcohol while using morphine gel?**

Normally, we do not expect this to be a problem. However, if you feel drowsy after applying the gel you should always avoid alcohol. Let your doctor or nurse know immediately if this happens.

**Is it safe to drive while I am on this treatment?**

If you do feel drowsy after the gel is put on, you must not drive. Let your doctor or nurse know immediately if this happens.

**Is there anything else I need to know?**

Always tell the person prescribing your morphine gel of any other medicines you are using, this includes medicines you can buy over the counter, and herbal or homeopathic treatments.

Store your morphine gel at room temperature. Remember to always store medicines out of the reach of children.

**How do I get a repeat prescription?**

In most cases, your family doctor (GP) will prescribe further supplies of your gel that you can get from your local pharmacist. Your hospital consultant will organise this for you. If this is not possible, you will continue to see your hospital consultant and get supplies from the hospital pharmacy. These choices will be discussed with you.

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your morphine gel, please contact the person who prescribed this for you.

If you are known to the palliative care team at Guy’s and St Thomas’ Hospital, you can contact them, **t**: 020 7188 4754, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. Out of hours, **t**: 020 7188 2255.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w**: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

**Pharmacy Medicines Helpline**

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. **t**: 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.

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A list of resources is available on request

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