

# CHECKLIST FOR THE PRESCRIPTION OF MORPHINE FOR CHRONIC PAIN

## 1. Have I prescribed the right dose?

There is no 'standard' dose of oral morphine. The dose ranges from 2.5mg 4-hourly to 50mg 4-hourly (sometimes more). Most patients need less than 30mg 4-hourly. The oral route should be used wherever possible.

Start with 5-10mg morphine 4-hourly and increase every 24 hours until the pain is **AT LEAST** 90% controlled.

Typical dose increments :-

10>15>20>30>40>60>80>100>120>160>200mg

## 2. Have I prescribed a regular 4-hourly dose?

## 3. Have I remembered A-B-C?

Anti-emetic  
Breakthrough pain, and  
Constipation

Have I prescribed 50-100% of the regular 4-hourly dose to be used prn for breakthrough pain?

Have I prescribed a laxative?

(Co-danthramer or Co-danthrusate are suitable)

Typical doses	Co-danthramer	Co-danthrusate caps
10mg morphine 4-hourly	5mls	2
30mg morphine 4-hourly	10mls	4
90mg morphine 4-hourly	15mls	6

(Start low and titrate up)

## 4. Have I prescribed a double dose at 10.00pm to avoid waking this patient at 2.00am?

Safe for morphine doses up to 40mg 4-hourly.

## 5. Have I prescribed an antiemetic prn?

Haloperidol 1.5 – 3mg is suitable.

- Review this patient every 24 hours (at least) to adjust the dose.
- Once this patient is stable, convert to modified release morphine 12-hourly eg Zomorph or MST.
- If oral medication is contraindicated for this patient, use subcutaneous morphine (one half the oral morphine dose) or diamorphine (one third oral morphine dose).

Remember easy access resources:

- The British National Formulary has an excellent palliative care section
- The North of England Cancer Network Palliative Care guidelines
- The Lothian palliative care guidelines

North Cumbria Palliative Care website at:

[www.gp-palliativecare.co.uk](http://www.gp-palliativecare.co.uk)

links to all of these resources on the following pages:

<http://www.gp-palliativecare.co.uk/?c=local&a=guidelines>

<http://www.gp-palliativecare.co.uk/?c=national>

Department of Palliative Medicine March 2011

If you want any help or advice please contact:

Hospital Pharmacy

Palliative Medicine Consultant or Specialist Medical team

Any member of the Hospital or Community Macmillan Team