

CLIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Updated: **October 2017**

Morphine

- **Keep this leaflet safe, as you may need to refer to it again.**
- **Please ask your vet or veterinary nurse if you have any further questions.**
- **This medicine has been prescribed for *your* pet ONLY. Do not take it yourself or give it to another person or any other animal; it may harm them even if their symptoms appear to be the same.**

The medicine you have been given for your dog or cat is called morphine. It may have a trade name such as Oramorph®, but often will just be called morphine.

What is morphine?

Morphine belongs to a group of medicines called *opioid analgesics*. These drugs are used to alleviate pain, and morphine is considered one of the most powerful pain-relieving drugs available. Other types of pain-relieving drugs are often combined with opioids to produce an even better effect. Morphine is a Controlled Drug and is subject to certain legal requirements; your vet will explain this to you.

Why has my pet been prescribed morphine?

Morphine is used in veterinary patients to relieve moderate to severe pain, particularly after surgery. It may also be used in chronic pain conditions to control episodes of particularly severe pain.

How should I store morphine?

This medicine does not require special storage conditions. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.**

How do I give morphine tablets/capsules/suspension to my pet?

Try to disguise the morphine in a strongly flavoured food that your pet likes. Alternatively, it can be placed carefully on the back of the pet's tongue and their mouth held closed until the entire dose has been swallowed. Capsules can be given whole, or opened and the contents sprinkled on some soft food. **Wear disposable gloves if opening capsules.** There can be some variation between individual patients as to the effectiveness and duration of morphine, so it is advisable to watch your pet for any signs of pain during treatment, to ensure they remain comfortable. If you are worried, please contact your veterinary practice.

How long will my pet need to take morphine?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time

for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients. Unused tablets and empty containers should be returned to your veterinary practice for safe disposal.

What should I do if I run out of medication?

If you are about to run out of morphine, contact your veterinary surgeon and ask them what they want you to do. It may be that your vet has prescribed a course that has now come to an end as your pet does not need the treatment any more. It may be that your vet needs to examine your pet before more treatment is prescribed. Remember to take any empty containers with you when you go to see your vet.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

If a dose is missed, give the medication as soon as possible. However, it is best to skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your pet's next scheduled dose. **DO NOT** give a double dose to make up for the missed dose and do not exceed the total stated dose in any one 24-hour period.

What should I do if my pet is accidentally given too many doses?

Contact your vet **immediately** if your pet receives an overdose of morphine. Signs of overdose include sleepiness and reduced breathing.

Can my pet take morphine if I am already giving them other drugs?

Tell your vet if you are giving your pet any other medications, even if you think they already know. This includes herbal or off-the-shelf remedies from a pet shop or pharmacy. Do not give your pet sedatives, antihistamines or cimetidine (used to treat stomach ulcers) while they are receiving morphine. If your pet is on any drugs used

to treat epilepsy then you must discuss this with your vet before giving morphine. Metoclopramide, a drug used to stop vomiting, is less effective in patients taking morphine.

What are the possible side effects of morphine for my pet?

Morphine may cause nausea, vomiting or constipation. High doses of morphine can cause excitation in cats. People taking morphine may have a feeling of euphoria, but this is difficult to determine in dogs and cats. Morphine can produce respiratory depression (a slowing down of breathing) and drowsiness, although this is unlikely at oral doses in veterinary patients. If your pet shows **any** unusual symptoms whilst taking this medication, please contact your vet.

What should I do if my pet is unwell while taking morphine?

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication, you should not give any further doses and should contact your vet **immediately** for advice.

What should I do if a person accidentally takes this drug?

If a person accidentally takes your pet's medicine, the person should be taken to the local hospital **immediately**. Take this leaflet and any remaining tablets plus their container (even if it is empty) with you.

Whom do I contact if I want to know more?

If you have any questions about this drug, or concerns about your pet's health, contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and will know about morphine.

The Prescribing Cascade

This medicine is authorized for use in human patients and is used by vets under the 'prescribing cascade'. The medicine is not authorized by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), for use in dogs/cats/pets. Your vet can explain the 'prescribing cascade' in further detail to you and also explain why they are prescribing this drug for your pet. You will be asked to sign a consent form stating that you understand the reasons that the drug is being prescribed and its possible complications, before the treatment is issued.

© British Small Animal Veterinary Association 2017. While the editors and the BSAVA have made every effort in preparing this information leaflet, the contents and any statements are made in good faith purely for general guidance and cannot be regarded as substitute for professional advice. The publishers, contributors and the BSAVA do not take responsibility for the information provided on this leaflet and hence do not accept any liability for loss or expense incurred (by you or persons that you disseminate the materials to) as a result of relying on content in this leaflet. To this end, you are advised to consult your vet and seek their professional advice before taking any steps set out in this leaflet. If you are a vet, you must not rely on the contents in this leaflet without independently verifying the correctness and veracity of the contents. BSAVA is not responsible for any alterations made to this document from the version supplied.