 

**Supplementary medicines information for palliative care patients**

All medicines are supplied with a manufacturer’s ‘Patient Information Leaflet’. This can provide a great deal of information about the medicine, its normal uses and side effects. However, most medicines have more than one effect on the body and for many years, palliative care (hospice) doctors have found that certain medicines are safe and effective for the treatment of symptoms ***other*** than those specified by the medicine’s manufacturer and there is now plenty of experience to confirm such use.

We are providing you with this extra information to inform you of the reason(s) why you are taking this medicine and to highlight any other information. This should be read in conjunction with the ***attached*** manufacturer’s patient information leaflet.

Methadone

**In palliative care, methadone is an opioid used as a strong painkiller to treat chronic pain and nerve pain under specialist supervision.**

**The use of methadone in palliative care is completely separate to its use for managing substance misuse.**

***Frequently asked questions***

***Q. What form(s) of this medicine are there and how is it usually taken?***

* Methadone is commonly available as tablets, liquid or injection
* It is usually taken twice a day but may sometimes be used once a day at night time. The total daily doses vary according to your individual need. It may take up to two weeks to establish the most effective dose for you.
* Methadone is also available as an injection and you may be given methadone as an infusion under the skin over 24 hours via a syringe driver (sub-cutaneous pump).
* If we suggest you start taking methadone for pain relief, you will usually need to be admitted to the Hospice as it needs to be started under specialist supervision.

**NB Always follow the dose indicated on the label or advised by a healthcare professional.**

# Q. What are the most common side effects?

* You may suffer constipation and need to take a laxative to relieve this.
* Nausea and vomiting might occur in the first 48-72 hours but this usually resolves with continued treatment. You may be prescribed medication to relieve any sickness for the first few days of treatment.
* Some people may feel drowsy or even confused with methadone- inform their doctor or nurse if this occurs.

# Q. What are the main special instructions and precautions when taking this medicine?

* You should always let healthcare professionals know that you are taking methadone and not stop taking it suddenly.
* You should not drive unless you are on a stable dose and are sure that your reactions are not affected. Please discuss this with your doctor.

**Further information**

If you have any questions about any of the medicines you have been prescribed or have any problems with side effects, please speak to one of the following:

*St Catherine’s Hospice St Catherine’s Hospice Pharmacist*

Telephone: 01293 447333 Telephone: 01293 535000

This supplementary patient information leaflet was drawn up and approved by the St. Catherine’s Hospice Medicines Management Group. V7 October 2022. Review date October 2024.

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