

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.

ALFENTANIL

Alfentanil injection is normally prescribed for patients on hospital intensive care units and during operations as a strong pain killer and to increase effect of anaesthetics.

In palliative care, alfentanil is used as an alternative to strong pain killers such as morphine and oxycodone, particularly if the patient's kidneys are not working normally.

Frequently asked questions

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

- Alfentanil is available as an injection for intravenous use.
- For specialist palliative care use, alfentanil is usually administered just below the skin (subcutaneously) either by a continuous infusion or sometimes as a single injection when necessary for extra pain relief.

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

Q. What are the most common side effects?

- Sickness and vomiting, constipation, dry mouth, effects on conscious feelings (drowsiness, low mood, confusion), reduced rate of breathing, effects on heart rate and blood pressure, visual disturbances and skin problems such as rash and itching.
- Your doctor and nurse will monitor you for side effects and make any necessary changes to the prescribed medication to reduce unwanted effects.

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
Telephone: 01293 447333

St Catherine's Hospice Pharmacist
Telephone: 01293 535000