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.

Atropine eye drops 1% to be taken by mouth

In palliative care, atropine eye drops are sometimes prescribed to be taken by mouth to treat excessive saliva (spit) production (sometimes called ‘drooling’).

Frequently asked questions
Q. What form(s) of this medicine are there and how is it usually taken?
• Atropine is available as 1% eye drops. It is usually prescribed to be taken as one or two drops (0.5mg to 1mg), four times a day, under the tongue. Ignore the printing on the box and container referring to use as eye drops.
  NB Always follow the dose indicated on the label or advised by a healthcare professional.

Q. What are the most common side effects?
• Very dry mouth and throat.
• Blurred vision, palpitations, indigestion and constipation.
• Difficulty in passing urine. This may be more troublesome if you have an enlarged prostate.
• Feeling sick, light-headed or dizzy.
  All these side effects are less likely with small doses.

Q. What are the main special instructions and precautions when taking this medicine?
• Atropine should not be used by people with glaucoma, or those with abnormal heart rhythms.

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

This supplementary patient information leaflet was drawn up and approved by the St. Catherine’s Hospice Medicines Management Group. VS MAY2016. Review date MAY 2017.

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