

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.

Lorazepam

In palliative care, lorazepam is sometimes used for breathlessness as well as anxiety and is taken by allowing the tablet to dissolve under your tongue.

Frequently asked questions

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

- This medicine is normally available as a tablet. The dose prescribed is normally between 0.5mg (half a 1mg tablet) to 1mg (one 1mg tablet). It is either prescribed as a regular dose or prescribed to be taken when needed, usually every four to six hours.
- Because the tablet is easily absorbed from the soft tissue in your mouth, you will be advised to place the tablet under your tongue where it can be left to dissolve and then be absorbed. Before taking this medicine, make sure your mouth is moist by taking some water. This will help the tablet dissolve better under your tongue.
- **Only the long blue make of lorazepam tablets dissolve under the tongue.** These are routinely supplied by the hospice. If you get a prescription from your family doctor for lorazepam, please ask your pharmacist to dispense the long blue tablets. If you have any problems obtaining the long blue tablets, please telephone the hospice or hospice pharmacist – telephone numbers below. **NB Always follow the dose indicated on the label or advised by a healthcare professional.**

Q. What are the most common side effects I might experience?

- Lorazepam might make you sleepy shortly after you take it. Because of this, we advise you to rest for a while in a comfortable chair or bed immediately after you take the dose. You should not drive immediately after taking lorazepam or if it makes you sleepy. Drowsiness is more likely to occur if you are taking other medicines that cause sleepiness. Please inform your doctor or nurse specialist of any other medicines you are taking.
- Occasionally, you may also experience light headedness and a dry mouth. If you do experience light headedness which persists, let your doctor or specialist nurse know.

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