# How we are funded

Our care and emotional support is totally free of charge for both patients and their families; but not without cost.

Severn Hospice is part of health services offered to people living in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and North Powys but we are not part of the NHS. We are a completely independent charity and have to raise over two-thirds of our running costs each year.

Our services are funded through a combination of kind donations from local people, fundraising activities, our lottery and shops, gifts in people's wills and grants from the NHS.

There is more information about our services and ways to support us on our website.

# Severn Hospice here and at home

# Information about taking strong Opioids

Shrewsbury<br/>Bicton Heath<br/>Shrewsbury<br/>SY3 8HSTelford<br/>Apley Castle<br/>Telford<br/>TF1 6RHNewtown<br/>SY16 2NH01743 23656501952 22135001686 623558

# severnhospice.org.uk

Strong opioids, for example morphine, are painkillers which act on the central nerve system. They are often used in palliative care to relieve pain and have been found to help breathlessness and coughs in some patients.

Strong opioids can be used at different stages of a person's illness and does not necessarily mean that the person is reaching the end of their life.

Strong opioids can be given as oral medications, patches or as injections depending on which is the most appropriate. Patients who take strong opioids often will have a long-acting preparation which can be a tablet or a patch as well as a short-acting preparation which may be tablets or a liquid.

You will start on the lowest possible dose of strong opioids. This may have to be increased if your pain is not controlled. There is no maximum dose of strong opioids; the amount needed varies from person to person.

# Common side effects:

## **Constipation**

This is a very common side effect; you should be prescribed a regular laxative with your strong opioid. Try to also ensure that you drink plenty of fluid.

# Sickness

This can occur particularly when starting strong opioids and should resolve within a few days. If it does not, try taking your medication with food. If no improvement contact your GP to prescribe an anti-sickness medication.

# **Drowsiness**

This is most common when starting strong opioids and when the dose is increased.

# Jerking

This is not a common side effect; if it occurs contact your specialist nurse or GP.

# Please use the space below to make notes or list any questions you might have.



# Frequently asked questions

#### 1. Will I get addicted?

This is very unlikely. However do not stop strong opioids without talking to your specialist nurse or GP.

# 2. Will I need to take strong opioids forever?

Your medication will be reviewed on a regular basis. If you do have less pain the strong opioid can be reduced or even stopped. However, if the cause of your pain continues, you are likely to need to continue to take strong opioids.

#### 3. Why do I need other painkillers?

Although strong opioids are good painkillers, some pains need different painkillers. You may need to take several different types of painkillers to control your pain.

#### 4. Where do I store my strong opioids?

Strong opioids should be kept in the original packaging and stored at room temperature. It is advisable to keep them in a cupboard (locked if possible) and out of reach of children.

#### 5. What about my day-to-day activities? You can continue your day-to-day activities. You

may find that things are easier when taking strong opioids because you have less pain.

#### 6. Can I drink?

A small amount of alcohol should be fine. If you do become drowsy, however, it is best to avoid alcohol.

## 7. Can I drive?

You must not drive when feeling drowsy. This may occur when starting strong opioids or when your dose is increased. We have produced a separate leaflet with more information about driving and strong opioids, or you can contact the DVLA on 0300 790 6806

#### 8. Whom should I contact for advice? Contact either your specialist nurse or your GP.

If it is out of hours, you can ring 111.