

# Common Morphine Myths

Many myths surround the use of morphine. This opiate is used for pain relief and helps patients manage difficulty breathing.

Morphine is a prescription medication.

## LET'S EXPLORE A FEW OF THE MYTHS ABOUT MORPHINE:

- 1. *Myth: Morphine causes drowsiness and mental clouding.***  
**Fact:** When morphine is first started drowsiness and mental clouding are frequent side effects. They usually subside within 72 hours.
- 2. *Myth: Morphine should only be given for severe pain.***  
**Fact:** Morphine is used effectively for the management of pain and difficulty breathing. As pain increases, the morphine dose can be adjusted upward to treat the increased pain. Morphine is considered the gold standard for three reasons:
  - It is very effective and works quickly.
  - It can be administered by many routes.
  - It relieves pain and difficulty breathing.
- 3. *Myth: Morphine is addictive.***  
**Fact:** Addiction is impaired control over drug use and can result in inappropriate medication use. Hospice patients taking morphine to control common hospice symptoms such as pain or difficulty breathing is an example of appropriate medication use. This type of use is not considered addiction.
- 4. *Myth: Morphine stops breathing.***  
**Fact:** Morphine is the drug of choice for managing difficulty breathing. Administering morphine allows the patient with difficulty breathing to rest more comfortably.
- 5. *Myth: People who take morphine die sooner.***  
**Fact:** There is no evidence to support that morphine hastens death. Morphine is used to keep the patient comfortable. The timing of the patient death is because of the illness.

## MORPHINE ALLERGY:

You can be allergic to morphine just like any other medicine. Report signs of allergy immediately to your Big Bend Hospice nurse and discontinue the medication. Side effects can be mild or extremely bothersome, but do not always require stopping the medication.

### Signs of allergy include:

- Swelling of the face and tongue.
- Hives. Itchy, red raised bumps on the skin.

### Side effects include:

- Drowsiness or mental clouding.
- Constipation.
- Nausea.
- Vomiting.
- Itching.

Remember, Big Bend Hospice is here to support you. Call your Big Bend Hospice team if you have any questions or concerns at (850) 878-5310.