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MYTHS ABOUT MORPHINE

Morphine and other strong painkillers help people who have moderate or severe pain because of a serious illness, like cancer. Sometimes, even if you're finding it hard to breathe, a small amount of morphine can help. When used correctly, with a doctor or nurse to help, morphine is really good at easing pain and is safe.

Correct use of morphine means the person will take the right dose regularly at the right timing schedule for that patient at that point in time. It might cause some common side effects, but we know how to handle them. There are many wrong ideas about morphine, even among doctors and regular people. This not knowing can mean that people suffer more than they need to.

Here are some wrong ideas about morphine, and the real facts:

Myth: Taking morphine means you're about to die.
Fact: While some people who take morphine might be seriously ill, others who are using morphine are up and about and can do their daily tasks because their pain and other symptoms are well controlled.

Myth: Morphine makes you die faster.
Fact: When taken regularly at the correct dose and schedule for that patient, there's no proof of this. Morphine is meant to help with pain, not to make things worse.

Myth: Morphine makes you sleepy or confused.
Fact: It might at first, but that usually goes away after 3 – 7 days IF taken regularly as prescribed. If it doesn't, there could be another reason, like your illness, which you should talk to your healthcare team about.

Myth: Morphine is addictive.
Fact: When used correctly as told by a doctor, morphine isn't addictive.

Myth: If you start taking morphine, you won't be able to stop, and it won't work later.
Fact: Your doctor can change how much you take as your pain changes, so you can still feel better.

Myth: Morphine should only be used for really bad pain.
Fact: Sometimes, even for not-so-bad pain, a small amount of morphine can help more than other meds.

Myth: You can just take morphine when you need it.
Fact: It works better if you take it regularly, like every four hours, to keep the pain away.

Myth: If you feel sick or itchy after taking morphine, you're allergic.
Fact: It's rare to be allergic to morphine. Feeling sick or itchy can happen, but it doesn't mean you're allergic. Feeling sick happens mostly when starting morphine for the first time, but will go away after 3 to 7 days IF you take the morphine regularly as you were told. Anti-nausea medication will also stop the feeling during those days.

Myth: Constipation from morphine means you can't use it.
Fact: Constipation is a common side effect, but you can manage it with the right medicine.

Myth: Morphine harms your heart.
Fact: Morphine is safe for your organs, including your heart.
Knowing the real story about morphine can help you make better choices about your pain relief and feel more comfortable talking to your doctor about it.

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