

# PRESCRIBING GUIDANCE FOR SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT IN THE LAST HOURS OR DAYS OF LIFE

## PAIN

**Present**

Review every 24 hours or earlier if 3-4 PRN doses in 24 hours

**Absent**

Is patient already taking regular morphine or oxycodone?  
NB If patient on fentanyl or methadone, contact the Palliative Medicine Specialist

**Yes**

Review cause of pain. Adjust dose accordingly. If swallowing is or will become difficult, convert the oral to the subcut route by halving the 24-hour dose of oral opioid and administer via CSCI \*.

Prescribe 1/6 (one sixth) of total daily dose subcut PRN to Q1H for breakthrough pain, up to 6 doses in 24 hours.

If eGFR < 30mL/minute refer to the algorithm for "Pain and Renal Impairment eGFR < 30mL/minute"

If 3 or more PRN doses have been given in 24 hours, review cause of pain and consider increasing dose in CSCI \* by a proportion of the total additional opioid used in the preceding 24 hours and increase the PRN dose accordingly (as above)

**Yes**

Is patient already taking regular morphine or oxycodone?  
NB If patient on fentanyl or methadone, contact the Palliative Medicine Specialist

**No**

If no contraindications \*\*  
  
Prescribe morphine 2.5mg subcut Q1H PRN to 6 doses in 24 hours.  
  
If the patient is elderly or frail, consider prescribing 1 – 2mg subcut Q1H PRN to 6 doses in 24 hours.

If no contraindications \* \*  
and if eGFR > 30mL/minute start CSCI \* with 10mg morphine/24hrs  
  
AND prescribe 2.5mg morphine subcut Q1H PRN to 6 doses in 24 hours for breakthrough pain

\* CSCI = continuous subcutaneous infusion

\* \* Contraindications include: allergy to morphine; intolerance such as uncontrollable nausea, vomiting, confusion, hallucinations; moderate to severe renal impairment – contact Palliative Medicine Specialist

If symptoms persist or for further advice:

Hospital patients: Contact Hospital Palliative Care Team (Weekdays 9am-5pm) Hawke's Bay Soldier's Memorial Hospital.

At other times and for all other patients in the community: Contact Cranford Hospice community doctor (06) 878 7047.