Alfentanil is a strong painkilling drug in the morphine group, which has been used in hospitals for many years. Its traditional use is in operating theatres, especially for short procedures because it is fast to act and also works only for a short time (unlike morphine, which lasts for about 4 hours once a dose has been taken). More recently, hospice doctors have realised that this drug could be very useful for treating pain that comes on quickly, either pain on movement or pain associated with a procedure.

Alfentanil can pass quickly through moist skin into the bloodstream, so a Devon hospital has developed this spray, which can be used either into the nose or the inside of the mouth. After using the spray, most people receive pain relief within 2-3 minutes, which lasts for about 10 minutes. This can be especially useful for people who can predict what brings their pain on, for example, changing position in bed or standing up.

Instructions for use

When a new spray is received, it arrives in several parts; a) an amber bottle containing the alfentanil solution, b) a pump mechanism and c) two possible applicators giving you the choice of using it in the nose or mouth.

- Using clean hands, unscrew the lid from the bottle and replace it with the pump mechanism (which screws onto the bottle). The pump mechanism has two thin plastic tubes coming from it.
- If you want to use the spray *in the mouth* – attach the *spray button with 4" long tube* to the *shorter* of the two plastic tubes on the pump.

- If you want to use the spray *in the nose* – attach the spray button *with the nostril shaped head* to the *longer* of the two plastic tubes on the pump.
- When you use the spray for the first time, please press the button fully twice to 'prime' the spray – to fill the tubes. This only needs to be done when first setting up, not before each use.
- To use the spray, place the delivery tube inside the mouth or nose (as chosen) and spray as directed either onto the inside of the nostril or inside of the cheek.
- The dose prescribed by the doctor depends on your individual pain. You may start with 1 or 2 sprays but can increase to 4, 6 or 9 sprays if required and agreed with your doctor or homecare nurse.

Frequently asked questions

Q. Are there any side effects to this preparation?
A. You may feel drowsy whilst the alfentanil is working, but this should wear off as quickly as the pain relief.

Q. How often can I use the spray?
A. Your doctor will advise you on this depending on the pain you are experiencing. Some people may only need to use it once a day whilst others may need to use it more frequently. If your need to use it increases greatly, check with your doctor or nurse.

Q. What happens if I swallow or inhale the spray?
A. It is not dangerous to inhale or swallow the spray, but it will not work by these methods – it needs to be in direct contact with the moist area to get through into the bloodstream.

Q. Will it interfere with my other medicines?
A. It will normally be used in addition to other medicines, especially other pain relievers, but please make sure that you tell any other doctor, nurse or pharmacist who is caring for you that you are using this spray.

Q. Can I get the spray from my GP and local pharmacy (chemist)?
A. Yes – we can send an information letter to both these people with the necessary details.

Q. How long will the spray last?
A. It contains enough liquid for about 30 sprays

Q. Where should I store the spray?
A. The spray may be kept at room temperature, but as with all medicines, it is important to keep it out of the reach of children.

N.B. Once it has been opened, a bottle can be used for 28 days (4 weeks) Please write the date of opening down (e.g. on the bottle label) then you will be reminded to request a new bottle in time. Please note that it can take a few days for supplies to arrive at a local pharmacy so please allow this when requesting a refill.

Patient Information Leaflet for

ALFENTANIL SPRAY

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