



ORAL MORPHINE AT END OF LIFE:

A Simple Guide for Families

What Oral Morphine Is

Oral morphine is a medication used in hospice to ease pain and reduce shortness of breath.

It brings comfort, helps the body relax, and allows for peaceful rest.

Why It Helps

Eases air hunger

Softens pain

Relaxes the body

Does not speed up dying

Morphine reduces suffering — it does not hasten death.

What Families May Notice

Calmer breathing

Softer facial expression

Less restlessness

More peaceful sleep

Reduced anxiety

These are signs of comfort.

How It Is Given

Under the tongue or inside the cheek

Works in 10–15 minutes

Very small doses

Swallowing not required

Common Concerns

Will it make them pass sooner? No.

Will it stop their breathing? No.

Will it sedate them too much? It eases the struggle.

Is it safe? Yes — hospice doses are gentle.

When to Give a Dose

Increased breathing effort

Grimacing or pain

Moaning or restlessness

Fast or panicked breathing

Trouble settling

Call your nurse if unsure.

When to Call Hospice

If breathing still looks distressed

If pain returns quickly

If you're unsure about dosing

If anything feels different

A Word of Comfort

Morphine is not giving up.

It's giving comfort.

It allows your loved one to rest with dignity, peace, and love.

“Once symptoms like pain and shortness of breath are controlled, the body doesn't have to struggle as hard.

Often patients are more relaxed and alert, allowing for better conversations and more meaningful time with family.”