

## Used as directed, opioids are safe and effective.

It is important to take opioids, and all medicines, as your doctor directs. Because opioids are chemically similar to the natural endorphins produced in the body, most people adjust to opioid medications well. Side effects, such as a decrease in the breathing rate are minimal when opioids are given at the right time in the correct dose. At the end of life, changes in vital signs including blood pressure, breathing and heart rate are usually indications of the natural process of dying and not indications of opioid toxicity.

## Opioids can safely be administered by a pain pump.

If pain needs to be controlled fairly quickly, a pump may be used to provide a constant supply of the opioid and steady pain relief.

- ⌘ Using a button on the pump the person can self-administer an additional dose calculated to safely relieve pain
- ⌘ Intravenous (IV) opioids act quickly but a single dose lasts only about 15 minutes
- ⌘ The pump is designed so that pushing the button repeatedly will only release the programmed dose of medication about every 15 minutes
- ⌘ If needed the opioid dose can be safely increased every 8 to 12 hours

Hospice and palliative care professionals have extensive training and experience in the treatment of pain and other uncomfortable symptoms associated with serious illness and advancing disease.

For more information, please contact CaringInfo at 800.658.8898, [caringinfo@nhpco.org](mailto:caringinfo@nhpco.org) or visit [www.caringinfo.org](http://www.caringinfo.org).

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