Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Morphine and Naltrexone

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it’s used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Embeda [DSC]

Warning

- This drug is a strong pain drug that can put you at risk for addiction, abuse, and misuse. Misuse or abuse of this drug can lead to overdose and death. Talk with your doctor.
- You will be watched closely to make sure you do not misuse, abuse, or become addicted to this drug.
- Even one dose of this drug may be deadly if it is taken by someone else or by accident, especially in children. If this drug is taken by someone else or by accident, get medical help right away.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- This drug may cause very bad and sometimes deadly breathing problems. Call your doctor right away if you have slow, shallow, or trouble breathing.
- The chance of very bad and sometimes deadly breathing problems may be greater when you first start this drug or anytime your dose is raised.
- Swallow whole. Do not chew, break, crush, or dissolve before

swallowing. Doing these things can cause very bad side effects and death.

- If you cannot swallow this drug whole, you may sprinkle the contents on applesauce. If you do this, swallow the mixture right away without chewing.
- This drug has an opioid drug in it. Severe side effects have happened when opioid drugs were used with benzodiazepines, alcohol, marijuana or other forms of cannabis, or prescription or OTC drugs that may cause drowsiness or slowed actions. This includes slow or troubled breathing and death. Benzodiazepines include drugs like alprazolam, diazepam, and lorazepam. Benzodiazepines may be used to treat many health problems like anxiety, trouble sleeping, or seizures. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- Many drugs interact with this drug and can raise the chance of side effects like deadly breathing problems. Talk with your doctor and pharmacist to make sure it is safe to use this drug with all of your drugs.
- Do not take with alcohol or products that have alcohol. Unsafe and sometimes deadly effects may happen.
- Get medical help right away if you feel very sleepy, very dizzy, or if you pass out. Caregivers or others need to get medical help right away if the patient does not respond, does not answer or react like normal, or will not wake up.
- Using this drug for a long time during pregnancy may lead to withdrawal in the newborn baby. Withdrawal can be life-threatening if not treated.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to manage pain.
- It is only to be used when around-the-clock (continuous) care is needed for a long time. It is also only to be used when other pain drugs do not

treat your pain well enough or you cannot take them.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you have an allergy to morphine, naltrexone, or any other part of this drug.
- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have any of these health problems: Lung or breathing problems like asthma, trouble breathing, or sleep apnea; high levels of carbon dioxide in the blood; or stomach or bowel block or narrowing.
- If you have taken certain drugs for depression or Parkinson’s disease in the last 14 days. This includes isocarboxazid, phenelzine, tranylcypromine, selegiline, or rasagiline. Very high blood pressure may happen.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Linezolid or methylene blue.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Buprenorphine, butorphanol, nalbuphine, or pentazocine.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert until you see how this drug affects you.
- To lower the chance of feeling dizzy or passing out, rise slowly if you have been sitting or lying down. Be careful going up and down stairs.
- Do not take this drug with other strong pain drugs or if you are using a pain patch without talking to your doctor first.
- Do not take more than what your doctor told you to take. Taking more than you are told may raise your chance of very bad side effects.
- Have your blood work checked if you are on this drug for a long time. Talk with your doctor.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.
- This drug may raise the chance of seizures in some people, including people who have had seizures in the past. Talk to your doctor to see if you have a greater chance of seizures while taking this drug.
- If you have been taking this drug for a long time or at high doses, it may not work as well and you may need higher doses to get the same effect. This is known as tolerance. Call your doctor if this drug stops working well. Do not take more than ordered.
- Long-term or regular use of opioid drugs like this drug may lead to dependence. Lowering the dose or stopping this drug all of a sudden may cause a greater risk of withdrawal or other severe problems. Talk to your doctor before you lower the dose or stop this drug. You will need to follow your doctor’s instructions. Tell your doctor if you have more pain, mood changes, thoughts of suicide, or any other bad effects.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.

- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant. If you are pregnant or you get pregnant while taking this drug, call your doctor right away.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Trouble breathing, slow breathing, or shallow breathing.
- Shortness of breath.
- Very bad dizziness or passing out.
- Seizures.
- Severe upset stomach or throwing up.
- Very bad constipation.
- Chest pain or pressure or a fast heartbeat.
- Feeling very sleepy.
- Noisy breathing.
- Breathing problems during sleep (sleep apnea).
- Feeling confused.
- Severe stomach pain.
- Long-term use of an opioid drug may lead to lower sex hormone levels. Call your doctor if you have a lowered interest in sex, fertility problems, no menstrual period, or ejaculation problems.

- A severe and sometimes deadly problem called serotonin syndrome may happen if you take this drug with certain other drugs. Call your doctor right away if you have agitation; change in balance; confusion; hallucinations; fever; fast or abnormal heartbeat; flushing; muscle twitching or stiffness; seizures; shivering or shaking; sweating a lot; severe diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up; or severe headache.
- Taking an opioid drug like this drug may lead to a rare but severe adrenal gland problem. Call your doctor right away if you feel very tired or weak, you pass out, or you have severe dizziness, very upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away.

- Headache.
- Feeling sleepy.
- Dizziness.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Constipation.
- Dry mouth.
- Itching.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Belly pain.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also

report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- Swallow capsule whole. Do not chew, break, or crush.
- If you cannot swallow this drug whole, you may sprinkle the contents on applesauce. If you do this, swallow the mixture right away without chewing.
- Rinse mouth to make sure all contents have been swallowed.
- Throw away any unused part of the capsule after putting on applesauce.
- Do not inject or snort this drug. Doing any of these things can cause very bad side effects like trouble breathing and death from overdose.
- Do not put this drug down a feeding tube.
- Do not use for fast pain relief or on an as needed basis.
- Do not use for pain relief after surgery if you have not been taking drugs like this drug.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.
- If you are not sure what to do if you miss a dose, call your doctor.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Store this drug in a safe place where children cannot see or reach it, and where other people cannot get to it. A locked box or area may help keep this drug safe. Keep all drugs away from pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour

down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- A drug called naloxone can be used to help treat an overdose of this drug. Your doctor may order naloxone for you to keep with you while you take this drug. If you have questions about how to get or use naloxone, talk with your doctor or pharmacist. If you think there has been an overdose, get medical care right away even if naloxone has been used.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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