

## Supportive care

# Effentora tablets®

Effentora® is used to treat breakthrough pain (a temporary flare in pain) related to cancer. The possible benefits of treatment vary; your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist will be happy to answer any questions you have about your treatment.

This should be read in conjunction with the manufacturer's patient information leaflet.

### What is Effentora®?

Effentora® is a tablet which contains a drug called fentanyl, a strong opioid painkiller. As it is absorbed quickly it has the potential advantage of providing rapid pain relief. You will only be prescribed Effentora® if you are already prescribed a regular strong opioid painkiller (e.g. morphine, fentanyl or oxycodone).

### How do I take Effentora®?

Effentora® should be administered by placing the tablet directly between the cheek and gum. This is called 'buccal' administration. The tablets should not be swallowed and allowed to dissolve completely without chewing or sucking. If your mouth is dry, you may use water to moisten your mouth prior to taking Effentora® to allow the tablet to dissolve. You should not eat or drink until the tablet has completely dissolved.

### What dose of Effentora® is usually prescribed?

The starting dose will be 100 micrograms of Effentora® as is required for breakthrough pain. The effects vary from person to person and the dose is increased based on how effective it is at managing your pain. If adequate pain relief is achieved within 30 minutes you remain on 100 micrograms of Effentora®. If not the dose would be increased as described below. This is because the effects vary from person to person and the dose is increased based on how effective it is at managing your pain.

- If your pain is not relieved within 30 minutes after the start of administration of a single tablet, a second Effentora tablet of the same strength may be used.
- If treatment of a breakthrough pain episode requires more than 1 tablet, an increase in dose to the next higher available strength should be considered to treat the next breakthrough pain episode.

The prescribing doctor will talk this process through with you and ensure prescription of the required tablet strengths.

You can take up to 4 doses of Effentora® in a 24 hour period. Occasionally, this may differ but the maximum number of doses will be agreed between you and the healthcare professional managing your pain. You must leave at least 3 hours between doses.



## **Can I take Effentora® with my other medications?**

All of your medications will be reviewed when you are prescribed Effentora® and you will be advised as to whether you will continue with any medication that you have previously been prescribed for pain.

Effentora® may interact with some medications, including certain antifungal drugs such as fluconazole, and the antibiotics clarithromycin and erythromycin. You should also avoid grapefruit juice whilst you are prescribed this medicine.

Use of Effentora® and sedative medicines such as benzodiazepines or related drugs increases the risk of drowsiness, and difficulties in breathing (respiratory depression). If you are taking any sedative medicines, you will be carefully monitored for side-effects.

If you have any queries or concerns about Effentora® and other medicines you are taking, you can discuss with your doctor, specialist nurse or pharmacist. Further information is available in the manufacturer's patient information leaflet which is supplied with the medication.

## **What are the possible risks/side-effects?**

Tiredness or sleepiness may occur. Other side-effects may include sickness, constipation and confusion. In overdose, please seek medical attention urgently because Effentora® can slow your breathing pattern. If this is not treated, it can be potentially fatal.

## **Is Effentora® addictive?**

Most patients do not suffer from addiction when Effentora® is started appropriately and reviewed alongside your pain. However, there have been some reports of addiction to these fentanyl preparations. Risk of addiction is lower when the medication is used appropriately in a clinical setting. Please discuss this with your doctor, specialist nurse or pharmacist if you would like further information

## **What is the length of treatment and plan for follow-up?**

The length of treatment will depend on your symptoms. You will be regularly reviewed to assess whether the Effentora® needs to continue or the dose needs to be altered. We will agree together who will continue to review your pain. You will be either be reviewed by The Christie supportive care team or a local service if this is available.

## **Do I need to have any tests or special monitoring when taking Effentora®?**

There are no routine tests required. The healthcare professional managing your pain will want to ensure that your blood tests have been checked before starting treatment to ensure there are no issues with your kidney and liver function.

## **Can I drive if I am taking Effentora®?**

Effentora® may impair your mental and/or physical ability to perform potentially hazardous tasks such as driving or operating machinery. It may be an offence to drive if your ability to drive safely is affected by taking this medicine. You should not drive after starting Effentora® or after a dose change until you have had a discussion with your doctor regarding whether this is advisable and safe.

## **Can I drink alcohol?**

Effentora® can make you feel sleepy, and alcohol will add to this. We advise that you avoid alcohol. If you would like any further information about this please discuss this with your doctor, specialist nurse or pharmacist.

## **Who will initiate Effentora® and issue further prescriptions?**

Effentora® will be initiated by the supportive care team. It will be agreed between the supportive care team and your GP or other local service who will issue further prescriptions.

Effentora® is a specialist medicine in palliative care and is not readily available from your community pharmacy; who will require advance notice to order.

If your GP is willing to prescribe Effentora®, **please don't leave it too late to request a prescription.** You should request a prescription at least 72 hours in advance of you running out of medication to give your GP and community pharmacist time to arrange. Please allow extra time at weekends and bank holidays.

If you are attending The Christie supportive care or pain clinic for follow up, Effentora® may be dispensed by The Christie Pharmacy. You should be given sufficient supply to last you until your next review.

**If you run out of Effentora® and are unable to get a further supply, you must contact the supportive care team for advice.**

### **How should Effentora® be stored?**

When taken as directed and under medical supervision, Effentora® is safe for you. However, it is dangerous, potentially fatal, if taken by those it is not prescribed for. Please keep the tablets in their original packaging **out of the reach of children or anyone else who might take them inadvertently**, and if they are consumed seek urgent medical attention. Any unused medication can be returned to any pharmacy for safe disposal.

### **Who should I phone if I need advice urgently about Effentora®?**

Monday to Friday, 9:00am - 5:00pm contact the supportive care team on **0161 446 3559**, or **0161 446 8493**.

During the evening or at weekends and bank holidays, if you have any queries, contact The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658**.

#### **Useful contacts:**

- Secretary: supportive care team **0161 446 3559**
- Secretary: pain team **0161 446 8493**
- Supportive care pharmacist **0161 446 3443**
- The Christie Pharmacy **0161 446 3432/3433**

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact [patient.information@christie.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@christie.nhs.uk)

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.

Contact The Christie Hotline for  
urgent support and specialist advice  
**The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658**  
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

