

Prescribing Opioids: A Reference Guide

Starting Doses in the Opioid-Naïve Patient START LOW AND TITRATE BASED ON RESPONSE

Drug Name	Oral Dose	Intravenous Dose
Morphine	7.5 mg (15 mg pill cut in half)	2 mg
Hydromorphone	1 mg (2 mg pill cut in half)	0.2 mg
Oxycodone	2.5 mg (5 mg pill cut in half)	—
Hydrocodone	5 mg	—

CAUTION: Prescribers should always consult the individual drug monographs for comprehensive information. Transdermal fentanyl should not be used in the opioid-naïve patient.

Equianalgesic Conversion Table

Drug Name	Equianalgesic Dose		Oral to Parenteral Ratio
	Oral (mg)	Parenteral (mg)	
Morphine	25	10	5:2
Hydromorphone	5	2	5:2
Oxycodone	20	n/a	n/a
Hydrocodone	25	n/a	n/a
Oxymorphone	10	1	10:1

Potency ratios:

- oral morphine: oral hydromorphone is 5:1
- oral morphine: oral oxycodone is 1.25:1
- oral morphine: IV hydromorphone is 12.5:1
- transdermal fentanyl 25mcg/hr: oral morphine 50mg/24hr

Oral hydromorphone is 5 times as potent (mg per mg) as oral morphine

This conversion table is adapted from: McPherson ML. Demystifying Opioid Conversion Calculations: A Guide for Effective Dosing, 2nd ed. American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, Bethesda, Maryland, 2018.

Common Dosing Strengths and Availabilities

Formulation	Strength
Morphine Sulfate	IR 15 mg, 30 mg
Morphine Sulfate Oral Solutions	10 mg/5 ml, 20 mg/5 ml Also available in a highly concentrated 20mg/ml solution
Morphine Sulfate ER	15 mg, 30 mg, 60 mg, 100 mg, 200 mg
Oxycodone IR	5 mg, 10 mg, 15 mg, 20 mg, 30 mg
Oxycodone Oral Solutions	5 mg/5ml and 20 mg/ml
Oxycodone ER	10 mg, 15 mg, 20 mg, 30 mg, 40 mg, 60 mg, 80 mg
Hydromorphone	2 mg, 4 mg, 8 mg
Hydromorphone ER	8 mg, 12 mg, 16 mg, 32 mg
Oxymorphone IR	5 mg, 10 mg
Oxymorphone ER	5 mg, 7.5 mg, 10 mg, 15 mg, 20 mg, 30 mg, 40 mg
Fentanyl Patch	12 mcg/hour, 25 mcg/hour, 50 mcg/hour, 75 mcg/hour, 100 mcg/hour
Methadone	5 mg, 10 mg
Methadone Oral Solutions	5 mg/5 ml, 10 mg/5 ml, 10 mg/ml
Buprenorphine Transdermal System	5 mcg/hour, 10 mcg/hour, 15 mcg/hour, 20 mcg/hour