

Supportive care

Actiq® lozenge

Actiq® 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.

There are some differences between the manufacturer's information, and the instructions given to you by the specialist managing your pain. This additional information will inform you of the reason(s) why you are taking this medicine and to highlight any other information. This should be read in conjunction with the manufacturer's patient information leaflet.

What is Actiq®?

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

How do I take Actiq®?

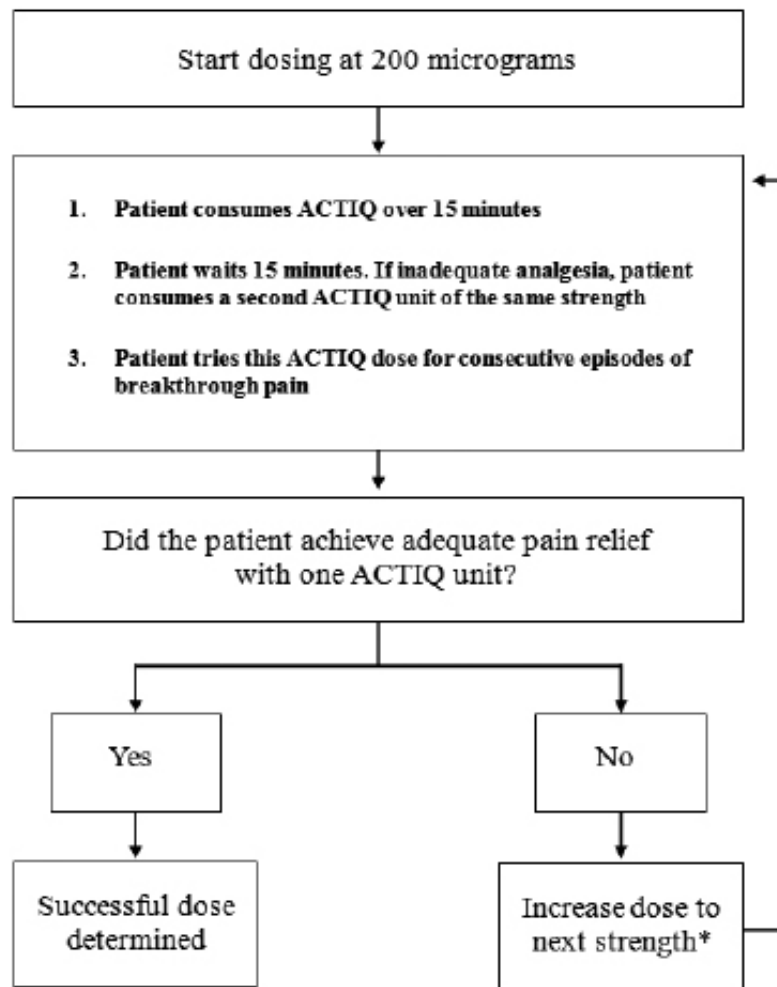
The lozenge should be placed in the mouth against the cheek and moved around the mouth using the applicator which is supplied. If your mouth is dry, you may use water to moisten your mouth. Actiq® should be sucked and not be chewed. You should consume the lozenge within 15 minutes. If you begin to feel unwell in any way whilst taking Actiq® you should immediately remove the lozenge from your mouth.

What dose of Actiq® is usually prescribed?

Regardless of the other pain medication you are prescribed you will always start by taking 200 micrograms of Actiq® as required for breakthrough pain. 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 adequate pain relief is achieved within 15-30 minutes you remain on 200 micrograms of Actiq®. If not the dose would be increased as described in the diagram overleaf. The prescribing doctor will talk this process through with you and ensure prescription of the required tablet strengths.



ACTIQ Titration Process



*Available dosage strengths include: 200, 400, 600, 800, 1200, and 1600 micrograms

You can take up to 4 doses of Actiq® 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 Actiq® with my other medications?

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

Actiq 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 Actiq® 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 Actiq® 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 case of overdose, please seek medical attention urgently because Actiq® can slow your breathing pattern. If this is not treated, it can be fatal.

Is Actiq® addictive?

Most patients do not suffer from addiction when Actiq® is started appropriately and reviewed alongside your pain. However, there have been some reports of addiction to short-acting 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 Actiq® 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 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 Actiq®?

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

Can I drive if I am taking Actiq®?

Actiq® 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 Actiq® 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?

Actiq® 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 Actiq® and issue further prescriptions?

Actiq® 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.

How do I get further prescriptions for Actiq®?

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

If your GP is willing to prescribe Actiq®, **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, Actiq® 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 Actiq® and are unable to get a further supply, you must contact the supportive care team for advice.

How should Actiq® be stored?

When taken as directed and under medical supervision, Actiq® is safe for you. However, they are dangerous and potentially fatal, if they are taken by those they are not prescribed for. Please keep them 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 advice.

Partially consumed Actiq® may still contain enough medicine to be harmful or life-threatening to a child. Even if there is a little or no medicine left on the handle, the handle itself must be properly disposed of as follows:

- If the medicine is totally gone, throw the handle away in a waste container that is out of reach of children and pets.
- If any medicine remains on the handle, place the lozenge under hot running water to dissolve the remainder and then throw the handle away in a waste container that is out of the reach of children and pets.
- If you do not finish the entire lozenge and you cannot immediately dissolve the remaining medicine, put the lozenge out of the reach of children and pets until such a time as you can dispose of the partially used lozenge as instructed above.
- Do not flush partially used lozenge, handles, or the blister packaging down the toilet.

Any unused medication can be returned to any pharmacy for safe disposal.

Who should I phone if I need advice urgently about Actiq®?

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.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

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