Oral Hydromorphone

Other names: Palladone® capsules (immediate release or quick acting hydromorphone)  
Palladone SR® capsules  
(modified release or 12 hourly, long acting hydromorphone)  
There are different forms of hydromorphone - check the name of the medicine on the box.

Q. What is hydromorphone used for?
A. Hydromorphone is used for moderate to severe pain. Quick acting hydromorphone starts to work after about 30 minutes and usually lasts for about 4 hours. It is used to control breakthrough pain as it works quickly. It may be given in regular doses when your doctor is working out how much hydromorphone is needed to control your pain. Long acting hydromorphone is used to control on-going pain and is taken regularly every 12 hours.

Q. Isn’t a pain killer like hydromorphone only used for patients who are at the end of life?
A. NO.
Hydromorphone is given for different sorts of severe pain. This may be as a result of cancer, heart disease or other illnesses. Treatment with hydromorphone may be needed to allow you to continue having as comfortable a life as possible. You will be able to go on taking hydromorphone for as long as you need to. The effects do not wear off with time and the dose can be increased if needed.

Q. When do I take it?
A. Quick acting hydromorphone is sometimes taken regularly every 4-6 hours. An extra dose can be taken if the pain comes back between the regular doses or if you are taking long acting hydromorphone to control your pain. Wait about 30-60 minutes after taking the extra dose of quick acting hydromorphone. If you still have pain take a second dose. If you need more than 2-3 extra doses of quick acting hydromorphone in a day, tell your doctor or nurse. Long acting hydromorphone is taken every 12 hours to control pain. When you are at home, take your morning dose and evening dose about 12 hours apart. Do not stop taking hydromorphone suddenly.

Q. What do I do if I forget to take a dose?
A. Take a dose as soon as you remember. Do not take a double dose to make up for the missed one. If you are sick and bring up the medicine, repeat the dose as soon as you feel better.

Q. Are there any side effects from using hydromorphine?
A. Sleepiness
This is most common when you first take hydromorphone or when the dose is increased. It should improve after a few days.
Constipation
This is a very common side effect. It is important to drink plenty of fluids and always take a laxative regularly as prescribed by your doctor. The dose of laxative can be increased or reduced to make sure you pass a soft motion regularly.
Sickness
If you feel sick when you first start to take hydromorphone, try taking it with food. Your doctor may need to give you some anti-sickness medicine for a few days until the sickness goes away.

Q. Will I become addicted to hydromorphone and be unable to stop taking it?
A. No. If you no longer need to take hydromorphone, your doctor will reduce the dose gradually so that you stop taking it without problems.

Q. Will hydromorphone always relieve my pain completely?
A. Although hydromorphone is a very good painkiller it is not helpful for all types of pain. Other treatments may be needed and suggested by your doctor or nurse.

Q. What do I do if I get pain between the regular doses of hydromorphone?
A. If the pain is mild, paracetamol may help. (Do not take more than 8 paracetamol tablets in 24 hours). If it is more severe you should take a dose of quick acting hydromorphone (see above). If you need more than 2-3 extra doses in a day, tell your doctor or nurse.
Some people find that doing certain things like having a bath or going for a walk brings on the pain. Your doctor or nurse may suggest you try taking a dose of quick acting hydromorphone before you start doing something that brings on the pain.

Q. How will I know if the hydromorphone is not going to work for some of my pain?
A. You may still have pain despite taking bigger doses of hydromorphone and may feel unwell in one or more of these ways:
• more sleepy than usual
• feeling sick more of the time
• restlessness or jumpiness
• bad dreams
Do not worry if this happens. Tell your doctor or nurse. Your doctor may reduce your dose of hydromorphone and suggest other treatments to help the pain.

Q. Can I drive?
A. You may be able to drive but you must discuss this with your doctor.

Q. Can I drink alcohol?
A. A small glass of wine, beer, sherry or whisky may help you feel better and improve your appetite. It is best to avoid taking more than this as you may become too drowsy.
(Discuss this leaflet with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist who will answer any questions you may have)