

Understanding your pain relief medicines when you go home

Information for patients



Please read this leaflet carefully.

- It is to help you control any pain you may have once you get home.
- It gives you information on the pain medicines given to you.

What are the most important things to know?

- When you go home you may be prescribed more than one pain relief medicine.
- Take the pain relief medicine as directed.
- Do not exceed the maximum daily dose for each medicine.
- If you think that your pain is not being managed then contact your GP for further advice.
- Do not take any other pain relief medicines that contain the same type of medicines as those you have been given to take home.

Now please read the rest of this leaflet.

If you require any further information talk to your GP, pharmacist or contact our **Medicines Advice Patient helpline on 0113 206 4376.**

What pain relief medicines might I need when at home?

When you go home you may need one or more different types of pain relief medicines. Most patients will be prescribed a combination of:

- Paracetamol
- Ibuprofen
- Dihydrocodeine, codeine or tramadol.

When should I start taking my medicines?

Nurses or pharmacy staff will explain to you when to start taking pain relief medicines at home.

How should I take my medicines?

Your medicines will be prescribed so that you can take them as and when required as stated on the container. However, it is recommended that for the first few days you take your medicines regularly. This is because after surgery, pain relief medicines work better by preventing pain, rather than treating pain once it has become bad.

- Do not exceed the maximum daily dose and never take two doses of the same pain relief medicine together.

What should I do if my pain is not managed?

If you are taking your pain relief medicine regularly but your pain continues, please go to see your GP.

- Your GP will talk to you about your pain and may suggest different medicines.
- Do not take more than the recommended dose for each pain relief medicine. This is because higher doses will not work any better, and may harm you.

Drinking alcohol

With all pain relief medicines we do not recommend drinking alcohol. Read patient information leaflets provided with the pain relief medicine for further information.

Constipation

- Dihydrocodeine, codeine and tramadol can cause constipation.
- You may be prescribed another medicine (a laxative) to help prevent constipation.
- Speak to your GP or pharmacist if your constipation doesn't settle after taking laxatives.
- To help prevent constipation try to eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables each day.
- Drink plenty of water unless your doctor says otherwise.

Paracetamol 500 mg tablets

Pain relief medicine for mild pain.

- Take **ONE** or **TWO** tablets every **4 to 6** hours when required
- **Do not take more than 8 tablets in 24 hours**

You must not take more than the recommended dose. Also do not take with any other medicines containing paracetamol including medicines which you can buy in a pharmacy or from the supermarket.

Ibuprofen 400 mg tablets

Anti-inflammatory pain relief medicine.

- Take **ONE** tablet (400 mg) **three** times a day when required.
- Take with or after food.

Stomach problems with ibuprofen

Sometimes ibuprofen causes stomach problems such as indigestion or stomach pain, therefore it is important to take ibuprofen with food.

If you get stomach pain - stop taking the ibuprofen and contact your GP if it doesn't go away.

Do not take any medicines containing aspirin, diclofenac, naproxen or other anti-inflammatories at the same time as ibuprofen unless prescribed by your GP. Some medicines that you can buy from supermarkets and pharmacies contain anti-inflammatories, please always check before buying.

Anticoagulants with ibuprofen

If you take warfarin or another anticoagulant such as apixaban, dabigatran, edoxaban or rivaroxaban, then don't take ibuprofen unless your doctor or prescriber specifically advise you to. There is a higher risk of a serious bleed if you take ibuprofen with an anticoagulant.

Dihydrocodeine 30 mg

Pain relief medicine for mild to moderate pain

- Take **ONE** tablet every **4 to 6** hours when required - but no more than **6** tablets in **24** hours.

Codeine 30 mg tablets

Pain relief medicine for mild to moderate pain

- Take **ONE** or **TWO** tablets every **4 to 6** hours when required - but no more than **8** tablets in **24** hours

Side effects with dihydrocodeine and codeine

- You may feel light headed, dizzy, or sleepy.
- If you feel sleepy, do not drive or operate machinery.
- You may also feel sick.
- Feeling sleepy or feeling sick may wear off as your body gets used to the medicines.

Tramadol 50 mg capsules

Pain relief medicine for moderate pain

Take **ONE** or **TWO** capsules every **4 to 6** hours when required - but no more than **8** capsules in **24** hours

Side effects with tramadol

- You may feel sick, light headed, dizzy or sleepy
- If you feel sleepy, do not drive or operate machinery.
- It can also give you hallucinations. If this happens, stop taking and contact your GP
- If you have epilepsy, talk to your doctor before taking tramadol.

Read patient information leaflets provided with the pain relief medicine for further information.

How do I stop taking the pain relief medicines that I take home?

As you recover from surgery, slowly decrease the number of tablets that you are taking. Do not suddenly stop taking your pain relief medicines. If you decrease the number of tablets, but find your pain is not managed, go back to your original dose.

Then try to reduce it again after a while. Talk to your GP or pharmacist if this does not work.

Dihydrocodeine, codeine or tramadol

If you are taking one of these medicines with ibuprofen - reduce these before you reduce the ibuprofen.

You could do this by:

- First decreasing the number of tablets you take in the middle of the day
- Then decreasing the number of tablets taken at night or first thing in the morning

Ibuprofen

Decrease in the same way as above.

Paracetamol

When you are only taking paracetamol stop taking lunch time and evening doses first. Then decrease the night-time and morning tablets, until your pain is managed.

What about pain relief medicines that I may have been taking before the operation?

You may have been taking pain relief medicines before surgery - such as amitriptyline, gabapentin or pregabalin. If so, you may need to carry on taking them after surgery. Do not suddenly stop taking your pain medication. Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about this.

Where do I get more pain relief medicines from?

We will give you a supply of medication when you go home; this may include pain relief medicines. You can buy paracetamol and ibuprofen if needed from your local pharmacy but you will need to speak to your GP for further supplies of other pain relief medicines as these are intended for short term use only.

Taking with other medicines

Some medicines you can buy from the supermarket or pharmacy contain pain relief medicines. This includes cold and cough remedies.

- It is important that you do not take two medicines containing the same pain relief medicine.
- For each pain relief medicine you take home, make sure you do not take any other medicines containing the same pain relief medicine.

If you are not sure, check the patient information leaflet or ask your pharmacist.



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