



# Medicines used to manage pain

## Pain control

Good pain control is important to keep you comfortable and improve your recovery. This leaflet has been prepared to explain the role of pain relief and to provide important information on pain medicines you may be sent home with. Please talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you would like more detailed information.

## Common pain-relieving medicines

Taking appropriate pain medicine correctly helps to effectively manage your pain.

You may be given more than one medicine to help control your pain. As paracetamol, anti-inflammatories and opioids work in different ways to relieve pain, they may be taken together. Always check the active ingredient of medicines to ensure you are not taking the same medication twice. There are three common types of pain relieving medicines:

Medication	Other information
Paracetamol	<p><b>Taking paracetamol regularly can help reduce the amount of stronger pain medicines you may need.</b></p> <p>It is most effective for relieving mild to moderate pain. Do not exceed 8 tablets containing 500mg paracetamol in 24 hours.</p>
Anti-inflammatories	<p>For example: <b>celecoxib, diclofenac, ibuprofen, mefenamic acid, naproxen</b></p> <p>These medicines help reduce pain, especially when you have inflammation and swelling. They should be taken with food to avoid stomach irritation. Do not take regularly for more than one week, unless advised to by your doctor.</p>
Opioids	<p>For example: <b>codeine (with paracetamol), tramadol, buprenorphine, oxycodone, tapentadol, oxycodone/naloxone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do not take products containing codeine while breastfeeding.</li><li>• Opioids are strong pain relievers and come in two forms:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Immediate-release provides quick, short-term pain control</li><li>• Slow-release provides pain control lasting up to 12 hours.</li></ul></li><li>• Medicine should not be crushed or chewed.</li><li>• Buprenorphine tablets – This medicine is placed under the tongue and allowed to dissolve. Tablets should be kept in place for 10 minutes without swallowing.</li></ul>

## The best way to take pain-relieving medicines

Pain-relief medicine works best when used to prevent pain, rather than treating the pain once it has occurred.

Immediate-release pain medicines can take up to an hour to have an effect on your pain.

If you know you are going to do any activities which may cause pain or discomfort, take your immediate-release pain medicines at least 30 minutes beforehand.

Long-acting pain-relief medicine takes more time to start working but lasts longer and should be taken regularly.

## Managing side-effects

- Taking pain-relief medicine with food or milk may help reduce nausea or indigestion.
- If you have heartburn or reflux, stop taking your anti-inflammatory and contact your doctor if symptoms persist.
- To avoid constipation, drink water and eat plenty of fibre. If constipation persists see your local pharmacist for treatment advice.
- If any of your pain-relief medicines make you feel sleepy or dizzy, do not drive a car or operate machinery.
- Lying down may help with dizziness and feeling sick.
- Sedative effects of alcohol may be increased if taken with strong pain medicine.

## How long should I take my pain-relieving medicine?

Take your pain-relief medicine for as long as you have the pain, or for as long as your doctor has advised.

If you require more strong pain-relief medicine, you should speak to your GP.

## How should I stop taking my medicine?

As you recover, you will be able to reduce the amount of pain-relief medicine you need to take. Stop taking the stronger opioid medicine first, then stop any anti-inflammatories and then stop taking regular paracetamol.

## What if my medicine is not controlling my pain?

Never take more pain-relief medicine than you have been advised. Seek medical advice if your pain is not controlled by your prescribed pain-relief medicine.



The information provided is for information purposes only. If you are a patient using this publication, you should seek assistance from a healthcare professional when interpreting these materials and applying them to your individual circumstances.



**Women and Newborn Health Service**  
Obstetrics Medicine Information Service  
☎ (08) 6458 2723  
🌐 [kemh.health.wa.gov.au](http://kemh.health.wa.gov.au)

## What if I forget to take my medicine?

If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If it is nearly time for your next dose, do not take the missed dose, but take the next due dose. Do not take a double dose.

## What if I take too much?

Contact your doctor or the Poisons Information Line on 13 11 26 for advice, or go to the Emergency Department at your nearest hospital.

## Pregnancy

Most pain-management medicines are safe to take during pregnancy in the doses prescribed by your doctor. Do not take anti-inflammatory medications (including topical preparations) during pregnancy.

## Breastfeeding

Most of these medicines can be taken safely, in the prescribed dose(s), by mothers who are breastfeeding. Do not take products containing codeine while breastfeeding.

## For more information

Contact your doctor or the Obstetric Medicines Information Service at King Edward Memorial Hospital on (08) 6458 2723 if you have any questions about medicines in pregnancy and breastfeeding.

## Useful links

- [mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets-parent/](http://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets-parent/)
- [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK501922/](http://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK501922/)

### Your regular pain relief

Medicine	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Bedtime

### Your when-needed pain relief

Medicine	Directions

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

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