



# Your pain relief at home

## Post-operative pain control

This leaflet has been prepared to explain the role of pain relief following surgery and to provide important information on pain medications you may be sent home with.

## Why treat pain after surgery?

Good control of pain is important for your recovery, helps improve your mobility and decreases the chance of complications after surgery.

## Common pain relief

There are many classes of pain relief used in the management of pain. Your doctor has chosen a combination of medications from different classes. This is better for you, as they all work in different ways to control your pain.

You will take your pain-relief medication in a ladder-like way. The medication to take for mild pain comes first and will be used the longest. Medication for moderate or severe pain comes second and will be stopped before the medication for mild pain.

## Pain relief step-down after surgery

### Immediately after surgery

You may be prescribed an opioid pain medication along with other medications like paracetamol and/or an anti-inflammatory and/or a nerve-pain agent.

### As you start to recover

You may be prescribed less or no opioid medications. You may still be on paracetamol and/or an anti-inflammatory and/or a nerve-pain agent.

### As you recover further

You may require less or different pain medication. You may only need paracetamol or no pain relief at all.

## Mild pain

Mild pain is managed by taking regular non-opioid pain relief medication such as:

**Paracetamol** To prevent and treat pain and reduce fevers. To maximise the effectiveness of paracetamol it should be taken regularly, not just when you feel the pain.

### Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)

To treat swelling, redness and soreness. Examples of NSAIDs are ibuprofen and celecoxib.

## Moderate pain

Moderate pain is managed by taking stronger pain relief than that used for mild pain. Some weak opioids include:

**Paracetamol with codeine** To prevent and treat moderate to severe pain. Do not take this medication with normal paracetamol.

**Tramadol** Used to treat moderate to severe pain. This medication can come as immediate-acting or long-acting; the pharmacist will tell you which one you have.

## Strong pain

Strong pain is usually managed with opioid pain medication. Opioids you may be prescribed include:

**Oxycodone +/- Naloxone (Oxynorm®, Endone®, Targin®)** - This medication comes in immediate-release or long-acting forms, and your pharmacist will advise which one you have.

**Tapentadol SR (Palexia® SR)** This medication is long-acting so tablets should not be crushed or chewed.

**Buprenorphine (Temgesic®)** This medication is placed under the tongue and allowed to dissolve so that it can be absorbed. Do not crush, chew or swallow this tablet whole.

## Managing side-effects

Taking the pain-relief medication with food or milk may help reduce nausea or indigestion.

- To avoid constipation, drink fluids and eat plenty of fibre. If constipation persists, see your local pharmacist for treatment advice.
- If any of your pain-relief medications make you feel sleepy or dizzy, do not drive a car or operate machinery.
- Laying down may help with dizziness and feeling sick.

## The best way to take these medications

Pain-relief medication works best when preventing pain rather than treating the pain once it has occurred.

Immediate release pain-relief medication can take up to an hour to have an effect on your pain. If you know you will be doing activities such as seeing the physiotherapist, take your pain medication accordingly.

Long-acting pain-relief medication takes more time to kick in but lasts longer. These medications should not be crushed or chewed.

If you are in pain all day, take your pain-relief medications regularly, as prescribed.

## How long should I take my pain-relief medication for?

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

If you require more pain-relief medication you must speak to your surgeon or GP.

## How should I stop taking my medication?

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

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

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

### Your regular pain relief

Medicine	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Bedtime

### Your required 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.

