

## Pain relief after surgery:

Outpatient/Day cases/Short inpatient stay  
medication information leaflet

Please tell the staff if you  
normally take any  
other medicines



# Introduction

Pain following injury or surgery is very normal. Different injuries or operations may lead to varying levels of pain and everyone experiences pain differently.

You may be prescribed pain killers as part of your treatment either as an outpatient or you may be discharged from a ward with some pain killers to help you control your pain.

You may have already followed our advice to have a supply of pain killers at home. If so please let the pharmacist or discharging nurse know.

Treatment with pain killers may not mean you are totally pain free. However, we aim for the pain to be controlled so that you are able to move, eat and drink, complete physiotherapy (if applicable) and sleep to the same level as before the injury or operation.

In this leaflet we will tell you about the most frequent pain killers prescribed at the Queen Victoria Hospital (QVH). Please read the manufacturers patient information leaflets within the medication box for more detailed information.

## How long do I need to take them for?

You may need to continue to take your pain killers regularly for a short period of time after your surgery or for as long as your doctor advises.

**However when you no longer need the pain killers you can stop taking them. Please discuss with your doctor or pharmacist how to safely reduce or stop them.**

There is a separate leaflet available to tell you more about this so please ask the nursing staff or pharmacist for a copy.

The most commonly used pain killers at the QVH are.

## Paracetamol 500mg tablets

Paracetamol is effective for mild to moderate pain; and also helps other pain killers work more effectively.

**Paracetamol** - 500mg – 1g (1 to 2 tablets) four times a day.

It is important you take no more than 2 tablets at a time and no more than 8 tablets in 24 hours as overdose can cause liver failure.

**Caution – do not take any other medication containing paracetamol (e.g. cold and flu remedies, co-codamol, co-dydramol, etc).**

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

This type of medication relieves pain at the site of your surgery by reducing the swelling and inflammation.

This medication may be unsuitable if you have stomach ulcers, gastritis, asthma, or are taking low dose aspirin or anticoagulants, such as warfarin, apixaban or rivaroxaban.

If you have had a problem with taking NSAIDs in the past, please let the doctor or nurse know.

If you have severe indigestion, breathing difficulties or severe stomach pain after taking NSAIDs, stop taking them and let your GP know.

NSAIDs have common side effects which include nausea, diarrhoea, headache and dizziness. If these side effects do not subside or are intolerable, please let your GP know.

You should only take one NSAID medication at a time. If you take any other NSAID regularly at home, e.g. diclofenac, mefenamic acid, naproxen etc, do not take ibuprofen as well.

**NASIDs should always be swallowed whole just after food.**

## **Ibuprofen**

200mg tablets – one to two tablets 3 times a day

400mg tablets – one tablet 3 times a day.

## **Naproxen**

250mg tablets – One tablet three times a day

500mg tablets- One tablet twice a day

## **Opioids**

These are stronger pain relief drugs that should be used for 'breakthrough' pain when your regular paracetamol and/or ibuprofen are not effective, although they are sometimes prescribed to be taken regularly.

Constipation is a common side effect of opioids. To prevent this drink plenty of water and increase your intake of fibre by eating regular portions of fruit, vegetables and cereals. If constipation continues to be a problem you may need to take a laxative, e.g. senna (Other brands are available). Other side effects include nausea and drowsiness.

**In 2015 the government introduced new laws regarding driving and medicines. It is an offence to drive when your ability is impaired by medication and you may also invalidate your insurance e.g. opioids can make you drowsy and affect your response time. If in doubt, do not drive. Seek advice from your doctor or pharmacist.**

Alcohol should be avoided while taking these medications as it may increase drowsiness.

## **Dihydrocodeine**

30mg (one tablet) every 4 – 6 hours up to 6 times a day.

Do not take more than one tablet at a time as it may not provide better pain relief but will increase the risk of side effects.

## **Co-codamol 8/500mg or 30/500mg**

This medication contains both paracetamol and codeine.

1 to 2 tablets, four times a day.

Do not take more than 2 tablets at a time and no more than 8 tablets in 24 hours.

**Caution – do not take any other medication containing paracetamol (e.g. cold and flu remedies, co-codamol, co-dydramol, etc).**

## **Tramadol**

The usual dose of tramadol is 50mg to 100mg (one or two 50mg capsules) taken up to four times a day. You should not take more than eight capsules in twenty-four hours. Occasionally, tramadol can cause confusion and disturbed thought and sleep patterns. If you experience these symptoms, it is best to stop taking tramadol and talk to your doctor. Tramadol can affect other medicines you take and make you unwell. Please ensure that your doctor and pharmacist know that you are taking tramadol.

This leaflet does not cover stronger opioid medicines or medicines that are used for the treatment of nerve pain (neuropathic pain).

If your pain is not controlled well enough, please discuss with your hospital team or GP/pharmacist.

If you visit your GP, please take your medication packets with you even if the packet is empty, and your discharge letter if you have been given one.

If you need to buy any over-the counter medicines for any reason during this time, it is essential that you tell the pharmacist which painkillers you are already taking to prevent accidental overdose or unpleasant side-effects

**Contact us:** If, after leaving hospital, you have any non-urgent questions about the medication you received from us, you may contact the pharmacy department:

## QVH Pharmacy Patient Medication Helpline on 01342414215

Please leave a message including your contact number between  
Monday and Friday 9am to 5pm  
and  
we will endeavour to return your call within two hours.

If your call is NOT about medicines, please telephone the hospital on  
01342 414000 and ask for the required ward or department.

**Disclaimer: This information is for guidance purposes and does not replace the professional advice given by qualified professionals.**

### Reference

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/think/141210PartnerPack.pdf>



Please ask if you would like  
this leaflet in larger print or an  
alternative format.

Pharmacy department

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