

Stopping painkillers



Information for patients discharged from the
Emergency Department

Reducing and stopping your painkillers

Pain is often related to an obvious injury, bone fractures or after an operation. Pain can be severe but usually gets better quite quickly. Pain relief only needs to be given for a short time while healing begins.

All painkillers have side effects. These may include sickness, constipation, kidney failure and stomach ulcers.

Prolonged use of strong painkillers is known to cause addiction and hyperalgesia. Hyperalgesia is a condition where medicines actually cause the pain to become worse.

Before you leave hospital make sure you understand exactly how and when to take your medicine.

Following your discharge from the Emergency Department we recommend your pain medication is reduced. It can be discontinued as healing occurs and discomfort decreases. This is usually in 5 to 7 days.

Medicines must be disposed of safely. You can return unwanted medicines to your Community pharmacy or the dispensary if your GP is a dispensing practice.

If you have problems with reducing or stopping your pain medicine, you should speak to your GP.

<p style="text-align: center;">Step one</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Stop strong painkillers</p> <p>E.g. Oramorph, tramadol and dihydrocodeine</p> 	<p>We recommend that strong pain killers are stopped as soon as pain allows. This is usually within 3 days of hospital discharge.</p> <p>Prolonged use of strong pain killers may cause problems, including: drowsiness, constipation, itching, headaches, confusion, weight gain, lack of sex drive, worsening pain and addiction.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Step two</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Stop ibuprofen</p> 	<p>Long term use of ibuprofen can cause kidney failure and increase the risk of stomach ulcers.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Step three</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Stop paracetamol</p> 	<p>The last pain medication you should stop is paracetamol.</p> <p>Paracetamol is usually safe to take but be careful not to take any other medicine that contains paracetamol like some cold and flu remedies.</p> <p>It may not be safe to take paracetamol with some other medicines. Please ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.</p>

Strong pain medicine and driving

Please be aware that strong pain medicines such as Oramorph, tramadol and dihydrocodeine, may impair your driving ability. You may be liable for prosecution by the police if you have raised levels of these drugs in your blood.

You are strongly advised not to drive or operate machinery whilst taking strong pain medication.

Further information regarding strong pain medicines and driving can be found on the website: www.gov.uk/drug-driving-law

If you require this leaflet in other languages or formats please telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01535 294019

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