Pain relief after day surgery

Issued by the Anaesthetics Department
Purpose:
This information leaflet is to help you with your pain relief.

Pain relief after day surgery
Pain after surgery is normal. If left untreated it may delay your progress, so it is important that your pain is controlled.

After your operation, you will be advised to take one or more of the following painkillers according to the type of operation you have had.

Benefits
Good pain relief can offer many benefits. It can help you rest comfortably and mobilise quicker so you can resume your normal activities.

Risks
As with all medication, there can be side effects, so it is important you read the manufacturer’s instructions for each of the painkillers you receive.

Paracetamol
This is a good general painkiller.

Dose: Two 500mg tablets taken every four to six hours. It gives good pain relief and prevents pain coming on if taken regularly “by the clock”.

The maximum number of tablets that you may take in 24 hours is eight tablets.
Ibuprofen
This is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug, which reduces both pain and inflammation.

**Dose:** One **400mg** tablet taken every eight hours.
You can take this as well as the paracetamol.

The **maximum** number of tablets that you make take in 24 hours is **three** tablets.

Ibuprofen should be taken with or after food. Ibuprofen may not be suitable for everyone. If you have ever had problems with severe indigestion or bleeding from the stomach, or you suffer from asthma – seek advice from the staff on the Day Surgery Unit.

Codeine
This is a stronger pain killer, which is helpful against mild to **moderate pain**.

**Dose:** One or two **30mg** tablets every four to six hours.

It can be taken with paracetamol and/or ibuprofen if needed.

The maximum number of tablets you may take in 24 hours is **eight** tablets.

Codeine can cause drowsiness so you should not drive or use machinery while taking it. You should not drink alcohol while you are taking codeine. Constipation is common while taking codeine.
Due to changes in law, we now have to charge day case patients for any drugs prescribed to take home when normal prescription charges apply.

Those patients who qualify for free prescriptions will not be charged.

As each drug prescribed will incur the normal prescription charge we would advise you to purchase your Paracetamol and/or Ibuprofen from your chemist/supermarket.

Codeine is prescription only so you will be required to pay for this if it has been prescribed for you to take home.

**Frequently asked questions:**

**What’s the best way to take the tablets?**

Effective pain relief is achieved by taking your painkillers regularly rather than waiting until you are in pain.

**Can I take these painkillers with my own medication?**

It is ok to take paracetamol, codeine and ibuprofen with each other as described.

It will usually be ok to take them with your regular treatment but we will advise you if this is not the case.

It is important that you don’t take any other preparations containing paracetamol that your own doctor has prescribed for you or that you have bought from the chemist/supermarket while you are taking the paracetamol we may have supplied you.

**It is important that you do not exceed the maximum dose of painkillers. This may cause you to feel sleepy, nauseated, dizzy and light-headed.**
Which painkillers should I take and for how long?
Take the painkillers you have been prescribed regularly for two to three days.

Make sure you take the painkillers at bedtime to help you get a good nights sleep.

After two to three days you may then be able to start reducing your painkillers to as and when you require them. If you have been taking codeine stop this first, then the ibuprofen and finally the paracetamol.

You may find that even if you do not need any painkillers throughout the day, you still need to take them at night to get a good, pain-free nights sleep. Some people find that they get little pain at night but need to take more painkillers in the daytime to let them get up and about. This is also a perfectly good way to use the painkillers.

Everyone is different
Some people find that they get better pain relief with codeine rather than ibuprofen. If this is the case, it is ok to take the codeine with the paracetamol and add in the ibuprofen if you need to.

When it comes to how long you need to take the tablets, again, everyone is different. You may be able to stop taking them after a couple of days – you might need them for a week or so. Do what is best for you.

Will they make me sleepy?
Codeine can make you feel sleepy. Listen to your body. If it tells you to lie down and sleep things off – do that. Remember that these are strong painkillers – it is not wise to drive whilst taking codeine after your operation (you may have been advised not to drive following your operation). Drinking alcohol while taking these drugs will also make you more sleepy.
Other problems:

Some people complain of constipation as a side effect of taking codeine. It is important to take plenty of fluids and eat plenty of fruit and vegetables to reduce the chance of constipation.

If constipation becomes a problem, see your usual pharmacist or doctor who may advise you on the use of laxatives.

What happens if I am still sore?

If your pain breaks through at any time, and you cannot control it with your tablets, telephone the Day Surgery Unit for advice.

Contact us using the main switchboard telephone number and ask for the relevant extension number
Telephone: 0344 811 8111

Day Treatment Centre
Hexham General Hospital
Extension: 5316 or 5317
Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm.

Surgical Day Unit
North Tyneside General Hospital
Extension: 2056
Monday to Friday 8am to 6.45pm.

Ward 15
Wansbeck General Hospital
Extension: 6169 or 6170
Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm.

Out of hours

Please contact your GP to speak to the out of hours service.
Alternative Formats
If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices
www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)
www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
Freephone: 0800 032 0202
Text: 01670 511098
Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111
www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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