



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Pain relief after day surgery

Issued by the Anaesthetics Department



Purpose

The purpose of this leaflet is to help you understand the medication that you may be offered after day surgery. Treatment is always planned for you on an individual basis, so your experience may differ slightly from the information given. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff.

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 painkillers covered in this leaflet according to the type of operation you have had.

Benefits

Good pain relief can offer many benefits, helping you to:

- rest more comfortably
- mobilise quicker
- resume your normal activities easier

It is much easier to relieve pain if it is dealt with before it gets bad. You should take your pain relief as soon as possible and continue the treatment regularly rather than waiting until you are in pain. We would expect you to be able to potter about at home initially and return to normal activity after a few days.

Paracetamol

Paracetamol is a good general painkiller. It gives good pain relief and prevents pain coming on if taken regularly 'by the clock'.

Dose: Take TWO 500mg tablets every four to six hours. The maximum number of tablets that you may take in 24 hours is 8 tablets.

Ibuprofen

This is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug which reduces both pain and inflammation. You can take this as well as the paracetamol. Ibuprofen is available to buy as 200mg or 400mg tablets.

Dose: Take 400mg THREE times a day with or after food.

Ibuprofen may not be suitable for everyone.

If you have ever had issues with the following:

- severe indigestion
- bleeding from the stomach
- you suffer from asthma
- have known kidney disease
- take any regular medication

Please seek advice from the staff on the day surgery unit. Only take if recommended by your anaesthetist.

Morphine and morphine-like drugs

Codeine

This is a stronger painkiller which is helpful against moderate pain. It can be taken with paracetamol and /or ibuprofen if needed.

Dose: Take ONE or TWO 30mg tablets every four to six hours if required. The maximum number of tablets you may take in 24 hours is 8 tablets.

Tramadol

If you are unable to take codeine, you may be offered tramadol instead for moderate pain. It can also be taken with paracetamol and /or ibuprofen if needed.

Dose: Take ONE or TWO 50mg capsules every four to six hours if required. The maximum number of capsules you may take in 24 hours is 8 capsules.

Morphine sulfate

This is a strong painkiller, given in liquid form, which you may need for more severe pain if codeine (or tramadol) is not effective. It can be taken along with the regular paracetamol, ibuprofen and codeine medications. However, if you have needed more than two doses of morphine sulfate in 24 hours, you should stop the codeine and replace it with morphine sulfate as directed below (continue regular paracetamol and ibuprofen).

Dose: Take a 5ml dose every four hours when required, up to a maximum of FOUR doses in 24hours.

The painkillers work better when taken together, so make sure you take the mild painkillers even if needing stronger ones as well. When your pain is getting better, stop the strongest painkiller first and reduce as possible depending on your pain.

Anti-sickness medication

Ondansetron

Ondansetron can help reduce the sickness you may experience after surgery. You may be prescribed it if you have been sick immediately after your operation or have had problems with sickness after surgery in the past. Not all patients will need to be prescribed an anti-sickness drug.

Dose: Take ONE or TWO tablets every six hours if needed. The maximum number of tablets you may take in 24 hours is 4 tablets.

Risks

As with all medication there may be some side-effects. It is important that you read the manufacturer's instructions for each of the medications you receive. The dose of the painkillers that we give are set within very safe limits, but as individual needs can be very different, we may need to give more or less to achieve the desired effect.

The main side-effects that you might experience from the painkillers include constipation, dizziness or drowsiness, nausea and vomiting. If you are intolerant of a drug do not take it.

Constipation

Constipation commonly occurs after surgery due to bed-rest, change in diet, lack of fluids and medication. It is a common side-effect of morphine and morphine-like drugs, e.g. codeine and tramadol.

If you become constipated you may need laxatives for a day or two to stimulate the bowel until you are moving around and drinking normally. Laxatives such as senna and docusate can be bought without a prescription from your local pharmacy.

Dizziness/drowsiness

Codeine, tramadol and morphine can make you 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, tramadol or morphine 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.

Reducing the dose of your strong painkillers may help to reduce any dizziness or drowsiness that you experience.

Nausea and vomiting

A combination of strong pain medication, anaesthetic, antibiotics and the general effects of surgery can cause some people to feel sick for a short time. If you have suffered from sickness after previous operations, you may be sent home with an anti-sickness tablet called ondansetron to try and reduce sickness this time.

Frequently asked questions

What's the best way to take the medication?

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 okay to take paracetamol, ibuprofen and codeine or morphine with each other as described. It will usually be okay 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 pharmacist / supermarket while you are taking the paracetamol we may have supplied you.

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 morphine, switch to codeine (or tramadol) first, then stop the codeine (or tramadol) followed by 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 night's 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 (or tramadol) rather than ibuprofen. If this is the case, it is okay to take the codeine (or tramadol) with the paracetamol and add in the ibuprofen if you need to.

When it comes to how long you need to take the pain relief, 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.

What medication will I be given at discharge?

We would normally ask you to have some paracetamol and/ or ibuprofen ready at home which you can purchase from your local pharmacy / supermarket. We will normally supply medications that are only available with a prescription, e.g. strong painkillers, anti-sickness drugs. If you require any more of these then you will need to contact your own GP.

Will I be charged for any medication that I am prescribed?

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.

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.

What do I do if I take the medication incorrectly?

If you accidentally take more of the pain medication than is recommended then you need to seek medical advice.

Contact your local GP/community pharmacist in daytime hours, or NHS 111 out of hours, and they will give you advice on what to do.

Contacts

Hexham General Hospital

Corbridge Road

Hexham

NE46 1QJ

01434 655317

Monday to Friday from 7.45am to 8pm

North Tyneside General Hospital

Rake Lane

North Shields

NE29 8NH

0191 2932548

Monday to Friday from 7.30am to 8pm

Wansbeck general Hospital

Woodhorn Lane

Ashington

NE63 9JJ

01670 564169

Monday to Friday from 7.30am to 8pm

Alnwick Infirmary

South Road

Alnwick

NE66 2NS

01665 626794

Monday to Friday from 7:30am to 8pm

Alnwick SDU is sometimes not open when there is no theatre activity. In the event of not getting a response from Alnwick SDU please try WGH SDU number above.

Out of hours

If your query is not urgent then please contact the provided sites during office hours.

You will be given an appropriate number to call depending on your type of surgery, for urgent questions out of hours. You may then be redirected to your local GP out-of-hours service or local urgent care centre.

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

PIN 143/V4

Review date: January 2022

© This material is the copyright of the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust