

Patient information

Chronic pain self-management Pain medication

There are many different groups of drugs used to help you manage your pain. The different medications can be broken down into the following types:

- **Simple pain killers (analgesics)**
Paracetamol
- **Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS)**
Ibuprofen, Naproxen, Diclofenac, Indomethacin, Parecoxib, Celecoxib, Etoricoxib, Etodolac, Meloxicam
- **Opioids**
These are often classed as 'weak' or 'strong':
Weak = Codeine, Dihydrocodeine, Meptazinol
Strong = Tramadol, Buprenorphine, Morphine, Fentanyl, Oxycodone, Tapentadol, Diamorphine, Pethidine, Methadone.
- **Antidepressants for nerve pain or sleep**
Amitriptyline, Lofepramine, Dosulepin, Duloxetine, Venlafaxine.
- **Anticonvulsants (Antiepileptics)**
Gabapentin, Pregabalin, Topiramate, Lamotrigine
- **Antispasmodics (Muscle relaxants)**
Baclofen, Tizanidine, Diazepam (short term use only)

Side effects

All medications have side effects, the main ones being:

- Nausea

- Vomiting
- Dizziness
- Dry mouth
- Constipation

Our aim is that the benefits of the drug outweigh the unpleasantness of the side effects.

The British Pain Society hosts a web-based resource: Opioids Aware; a resource for patients and healthcare professionals to support prescribing of opioid medicines for pain. www.fpm.ac.uk/faculty-of-pain-medicine/opioids-aware

Tolerance

Opioids can become less effective with time (this is called tolerance), meaning your body has got used to the pain relieving effect of the medicine.

Dependence

You can also become dependent on opioid medicines (dependence). This means that if you stop taking the drug suddenly, or lower the dose too quickly, you can get symptoms of withdrawal. If you run out of medicine, you can experience the same symptoms that include:

- Tiredness
- Stomach cramps
- Sweating
- Diarrhoea
- A runny nose
- Aching muscles

Addiction

It is rare for people in pain to become addicted to opioids. People who are addicted to opioids can:

- Feel out of control about how much medicine they take or how often they take it

- Crave the drug
- Continue to take the drug even when it has a negative effect on their physical or mental health

We do not know exactly how many people get addicted when they are taking opioids for pain relief but it is very uncommon. It is more common if you have been addicted to opioids (including heroin) or to other drugs (or alcohol) before. Addiction may be more common in people with severe depression or anxiety. This does not mean that if you have had an addiction problem before or you are very depressed and anxious you will become addicted. It only means that you are more likely to become addicted than someone who has not had these problems.

Most people do not become addicted, so if you have had a problem with drug or alcohol addiction in the past, this doesn't mean that you cannot take opioid medicines for your pain. However, your health-care team will need to know about your past or current drug-taking to prescribe opioids safely and to help you watch out for warning signs.

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<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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