

Patient information

Stopping pain killers after hospital admission

The aim of pain control is to promote mobilisation and function and **not** the absence of pain.

Generally, treatment only needs to be given for a short period whilst healing commences.

All pain medication will have side effects which may include sickness, kidney failure, hallucinations, addiction and constipation.

Prolonged use of opioid pain medication is now known to cause addiction, tolerance and hyperalgesia. Hyperalgesia is the condition whereby the medicines actually cause the pain to become worse.

Following your discharge from hospital, **we recommend you stop all opioid medication within five to seven seven days** and then stop anti-inflammatories and paracetamol once able.

If you have problems with reducing and stopping pain medication, you should speak with your GP for further advice and support.

If you were taking pain medication (either immediate or a slow release preparation), before coming in for your procedure, you need to talk to your GP about reviewing this medication.

<p>STEP ONE STOP OPIOID PAIN MEDICATION</p>	<p>We recommend that opioid pain medication such as Oramorph, Codeine, Dihydrocodeine and Oxycodone are stopped as soon as movement allows. This is usually within <u>5 days</u> of hospital discharge.</p> <p><i>Prolonged use of opioid pain medication may cause problems, including: constipation, weight gain, lack of sex drive, worsening pain, addiction and death due to unintentional overdose.</i></p>
<p>STEP TWO STOP IBUPROFEN</p>	<p><i>Long term use of ibuprofen can cause kidney failure and increase the risk of stomach ulcers.</i></p>
<p>STEP THREE STOP PARACETAMOL</p>	<p>The last pain medication you should stop is paracetamol.</p> <p><i>Long term use of paracetamol is associated with an increased risk of a heart attack, bleeding in the stomach and kidney failure.</i></p>

Important safety messages

- **Store all medicines safely**

Make sure they cannot be seen or reached by children or vulnerable adults. Please check the pharmacy label for storage instructions such as 'store in the fridge'.

- **Never share your medicines**

Your medicines have been prescribed only for you to take - nobody else.

- **Disposal of medicines no longer required**

Unused medicines must be immediately disposed of safely. Safe disposal can be ensured by returning unwanted medicines to your community pharmacy or the dispensary if your GP is a dispensing practice.

- **Use the medicine as directed on the label**

Before you leave hospital make sure you understand exactly how and when to take your medicines, and you know how to dispose of your unused opioids.

Further guidance can be found in the WSH Pharmacy department's "Information about your medications" leaflet.

Signs and symptoms of overdose

Taking too much opioid pain medicine whether intentional or not is called an overdose. This can be very serious and may cause death.

Some of the signs that someone is experiencing an overdose includes:

- Confusion or hallucinations
- Unresponsive or unconscious
- Difficulty breathing or no breathing
- Slurred speech
- Very small pupils in the eyes
- Lips or fingernails are blue or purple
- Poor coordination of balance

Your family, friends and carers should know these signs so they can take immediate action.

**If you think that you or someone else has taken
too much of their opioid medicine
dial 999 immediately**

During your admission to hospital you may have been prescribed other types of pain medication.

Local anaesthetic patches (eg lidocaine plasters)



If local anaesthetic patches are beneficial, continue using them until your supply is used up. Your GP will not be allowed to re-prescribe these patches without discussion with the pain clinic.

Antineuropathic medication



If medication for 'nerve pain' (eg Pregabalin or Gabapentin) was prescribed, you will need to see your GP to discuss reduction and discontinuation of these drugs.

Opioid pain medication and driving

Please be aware that opioid pain medicines may impair your driving ability and you may be liable for prosecution by the police if you have levels of these drugs in your blood above specified limits.

You are therefore advised not to drive whilst taking opioid pain medication.

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

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email info.gov@wsh.nhs.uk. This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo)
<https://www.accessable.co.uk>



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