

PHARMACY

Drug Information

Painkillers



What are Painkillers?

- Painkillers are medications that relieve aches and pains. It is not unusual to receive a prescription containing more than one painkiller such as paracetamol, in combination with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and mild opioids.
- Paracetamol, NSAIDs and mild opioids belong to three different classes of painkillers. They work in different ways to aid pain relief.
- In general, paracetamol and NSAIDs are used for mild to moderate pain, while mild opioids are used for moderate to severe pain.
- When used together, their effects are additive. Therefore, they can be used in combination to treat moderate to severe pain.

What are Some Types of Painkillers and How are They Used?

Painkillers	Common Uses
Paracetamol (commonly known as Panadol ®)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To relieve mild to moderate pain • To treat fever
Paracetamol / Orphenadrine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To treat mild to moderate pain (Orphenadrine is a muscle relaxant)
Paracetamol / Codeine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To treat moderate to severe pain (Codeine is a mild opioid)
Mild Opioids <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codeine • Tramadol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To treat moderate to severe pain

<p>NSAIDs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naproxen • Mefenamic acid • Aspirin • Diclofenac • Ketolorac (injection) • Indomethacin • Ibuprofen • Meloxicam • Ketoprofen • Celecoxib • Etoricoxib • Parecoxib (injection) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To treat mild to moderate pain. • To reduce swelling e.g. gout
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How are Painkillers Administered / Taken?

- Follow the doctor's instructions on the medication label.
- **When "To be taken when necessary" is indicated on the label:**
Depending on the level of pain you experience, you may choose to take the painkiller(s) only when necessary.
- **When "To be taken when necessary" is NOT indicated on the label:**
You should finish the whole course of medication.
- If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose. Never take a double dosage to make up for the missed dose.

Can Painkillers be Administered / Taken With Other Medications?

- Since paracetamol, NSAIDs and mild opioids belong to different classes of medications and work in different ways, they can be taken together safely as long as you follow the instructions given by your doctor or pharmacist.
- It is important that you inform the doctor, dentist and pharmacist about other medications – including over-the-counter medications, supplements and traditional/herbal remedies – that you are currently taking, as they may affect the way you benefit from your painkillers.

What are the Important Side Effects of Painkillers?

- While medications prescribed by your doctor should be beneficial for your condition, they may result in some side effects.
- It is important that you recognise the side effects of your medication(s) and know how to manage them.

Side Effect	Management
Gastric irritation (NSAIDs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSAIDs are associated with gastric irritation. Therefore, they are to be taken after food and are often prescribed together with another medication (e.g. famotidine, omeprazole) to reduce the risk of this side effect. • If you experience gastric irritation after taking NSAIDs, you may consider omitting it or consulting your doctor.
Drowsiness (Mild opioids, paracetamol/orphenadrine, paracetamol/codeine)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You should avoid alcohol as it increases the risk of experiencing this side effect. • You should also avoid driving or operating heavy machinery if you are affected. • In situations where you have to maintain alertness, you may consider omitting this medication.
Nausea / Vomiting (Opioids)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take it after food to minimise this side effect. • Your doctor may prescribe another medication to relieve this side effect (e.g. metoclopramide, ondansetron).

If you develop rashes, facial swelling or shortness of breath after taking the medication, you could be allergic to the medication. Please seek medical attention immediately.

Are There any Special Precautions That I Need to Take?

- It is important to inform your doctor if you intend to conceive or breastfeed while taking this class of medication.

How do I Store Painkillers?

- Store your medication in a cool, dry place away from heat, moisture and direct sunlight.

If you have any questions regarding your treatment, please contact your doctor, pharmacist or nurse clinician.

Please keep all medications out of reach of children.



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