

Guidance on using pain killers

Pain killers (analgesics) can be used to treat pain, inflammation, and to bring down temperatures. Your doctor may have prescribed you a strong pain killer to use initially. This leaflet explains which over the counter tablets you can use as an alternative or as your condition improves. Pain killers are divided into 2 types: Anti-inflammatory (box 1) and general pain killers (box 2). As a rule (as long as you have no problems with taking them) you can use one sort of pain killer from each box AT THE SAME TIME. You can NOT use two pain killers from the same box at the same time. Check with the pharmacist if your over the counter pain killers are suitable to be taken at same time as any other medicines you're taking.

BOX 1 Anti inflammatory

Over the counter

1. Ibuprofen 200mg–400mg every 8 hrs -always take with/after food
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Prescription only

2. Naproxen 250mg–500mg every 12 hrs-always take with/after food

Common Side effects: Indigestion/upset stomach, can worsen asthma, may increase blood pressure. Older people should take with caution due to risk of serious side-effects. Avoid high doses or using for long periods of time.

BOX 2 General (& 'opiate') pain killers

Over the counter

1. Paracetamol Take 1 – 2 tablets every 6 hrs
 2. Co-codamol 8/500 (weak codeine and paracetamol) - available for short-term use only (max. 3 days) Take 1-2 tablets every 6 hrs
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Prescription only

1. Co-codamol 15/500 or 30/500
2. Co-dydramol 10/500
3. Tramadol (can be taken with paracetamol)
4. Morphine (quick or slow release) (can be taken with paracetamol)

Common Side effects of 'opiate' pain killers:

Constipation, nausea & vomiting, drowsiness, confusion, dizziness, hallucinations, increased/reduced heart rate, dry mouth