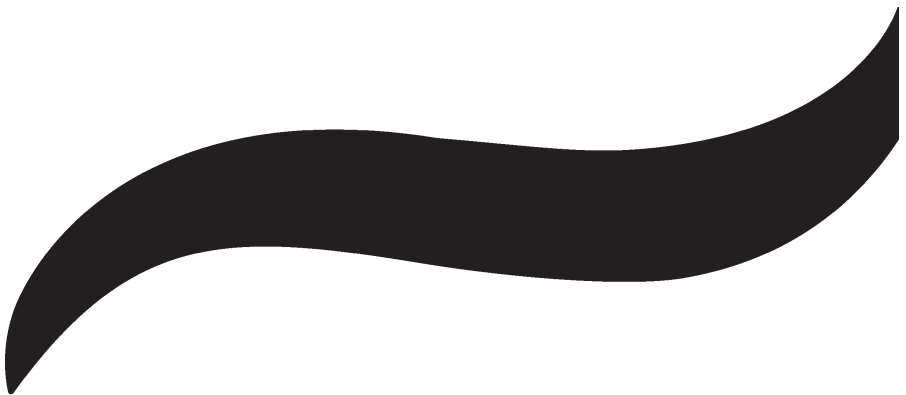




Taking Medication for Chronic Pain

Information for patients
Prescribing Management Team
Kirklands



TAKING MEDICATION FOR CHRONIC PAIN

Medications used to help reduce pain are called analgesics. They can also be known as “pain killers”. It is unlikely that medication alone will cure or relieve your pain totally. For this reason we use the terms pain relief or pain management medications.

The benefit from taking medication should always be more than any side effects you may have. Only you:

- ❖ Know how bad your pain is.
- ❖ Are able to say if your medication is helping.
- ❖ Know what side effects you are having.

Understanding your medication will help you to get the best pain relief with the least side-effects. You should know which ones to take regularly and which to take only when required.

Medication used to help manage chronic pain is a piece of the self-management pain jigsaw. They should be used alongside other self-help pain management tools.

If you are breastfeeding, pregnant or likely to become pregnant, you should let your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist know.

WHICH PAIN RELIEF SHOULD I USE?

The type of pain you have and how sore you are will help you to decide which pain relief may help you. It may be useful to keep a diary of your pain and other symptoms.

Your other medical conditions and medications are also an important consideration when deciding on the the safest and most effective pain relief medication you could use.

The three main types of pain are:

- ❖ mechanical
- ❖ inflammatory
- ❖ neuropathic

You may have more than one type of pain and you might need to take more than one type of medication.

Your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist can give you advice on which pain relief may help. They can also help you find the best way to take your medication. They can advise you on putting your dose up safely if your pain is worse and on reducing when your pain is less.

Common mistakes that can be made with medication for chronic pain include:

- ❖ Not taking them regularly enough or for long enough to fully assess the benefit
- ❖ Not taking the right pain relief for the type of pain
- ❖ Taking them for too long when no longer needed, or are not having any benefit

BENEFIT

Not everyone will benefit from every medication. It is not possible to predict. For this reason a trial of medication is often recommended. It may take a few trials to find the one which is best for you.

If your medicine is not helping you may not need to take it. Please talk to your doctor, pain specialist or pharmacist first. Some pain medicines should not be stopped suddenly

A 30% reduction in pain or improvement in function is considered a good outcome. A little less pain may mean you can manage daily activities better.

SIDE EFFECTS

All medicines can cause side effects. A full list is in the patient information sheet with your prescription. Please speak to your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist if you have any questions or concerns about your medication or side effects.

Building the dose up slowly can reduce some side effects. Others may pass or become less once you have been on a medicine for a few days.

Some pain relief can cause drowsiness. If medication makes you feel drowsy you should avoid driving or operating machinery. It is a criminal offence to drive a vehicle whilst unsafe due to medicine use.

You should be aware of the risk of loss of response to painkillers, dependence and addiction with some pain relief.

REVIEW

As with other chronic (long term) conditions, like high blood pressure or asthma, regular medication review is recommended. A review every 6-12 months is useful to check:

- ❖ Whether your pain is still a problem
- ❖ Whether you are still getting benefit from the medication
- ❖ If you are experiencing any side effects

OTHER INFORMATION

Do not share or take other peoples medication. Always advise your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist about any other medication or products you are taking. Including things bought from the pharmacy, herbal supplements or non- prescribed medicines.

You can buy paracetamol and ibuprofen (tablets or gel) and low dose paracetamol combinations; for example, co-codamol 8/500, from the pharmacy. You will need a prescription for other pain medication.

Remember to always store medication safely and out of the reach of children.

Understanding how your medications work will help you to get the best pain relief with the least side-effects.

We hope you found this information leaflet helpful. This information is not intended to replace your Doctor's advice. If you have any comments about the content, please let us know. This can be done by filling in the comment section, and sending it to the Prescribing Management Team at the address listed below, or by email.

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