



Your important health information

Managing pain following your caesarean

Good pain control is important. Taking pain medicine properly helps with your pain. When you go home from hospital, you may be given more than one medicine to help with pain.

These medicines help with pain in different ways.

There are three types of medicines for pain.

- **Paracetamol** for example, Panadol® or Panamax®
- **Anti-inflammatories** (Ibuprofen, Nurofen®, Advil® or Herron®, Diclofenac, Voltaren®)
Anti-inflammatories can upset the stomach and should be taken with food. Do not take for more than one week unless advised by your doctor.
 - Stop taking anti-inflammatories if you become dehydrated, have reflux or heartburn
 - Do not take anti-inflammatories if you have (or have had) a gastric ulcer, poor kidney function
 - Use anti-inflammatories carefully if you have asthma
- **Opioids** (oxycodone or tramadol) are strong medicines for pain. Use them for a few days only.

When to take your pain relief medicines

Taking paracetamol and anti-inflammatory medicines regularly can help with pain.

This can also help to take less opioid medicine. The opioids should only be used if you are still in pain while taking your other pain tablets.

- Read the label on your tablets.
- Please buy paracetamol and anti-inflammatories from your local pharmacy before you go home.
- Taking more medicine than you have been told can be harmful or fatal.
- Paracetamol, anti-inflammatories and opioids can be taken together to help reduce bad pain.
- Do not wait for your pain to become bad before taking pain relieving medicines.
- Ask your doctor, pharmacist or midwife/nurse if you have any questions about your medicines.
- If you are breastfeeding, your doctor will make sure the pain medication you take is safe for your baby. Small amounts of medication may pass into your breastmilk. Therefore, you should watch your baby for any side effects such as sleepiness or poor feeding.

If you know an activity will be painful, such as showering, take your pain tablet 30 minutes to one hour before the activity to reduce the pain.

What to do if your pain is not controlled at home

If you require more medicine or if it is hard to manage your pain at home, visit your general practitioner (GP).

If you have increasing or severe pain that is not responding to your pain medicine, you should visit your GP or the closest emergency department.

How to stop taking pain medicines

To stop taking pain tablets, cut down slowly. This makes sure your pain stays well-controlled.

1. Reduce how often you take any opioid medicines and then stop.
2. If your pain is still well-controlled, reduce how often you take any anti-inflammatory medicines. For example, from three times a day, to twice a day, to once a day and then stop.
3. When you are not taking any anti-inflammatory medicines reduce how often you take paracetamol, or take it only when needed rather than regularly.

Possible side effects

Most side effects are mild, and easily managed. Common side effects when taking an opioid medicine include: drowsiness, constipation, nausea or vomiting, dry mouth and dizziness. Do not drink alcohol while taking opioids.

Drowsiness

Opioid medicines can make you drowsy and slow your reaction time. Wait and see how the medicine affects you before attempting tasks such as driving.

Nausea or vomiting

If you feel sick, try taking your medicine with food and plenty of water. Your doctor can also prescribe medicines to help.

Constipation

Staying active, drinking water and having fibre in your diet can help minimise constipation. Your doctor may also prescribe laxatives while you are taking an opioid medicine. You can buy laxatives without a prescription from your local pharmacy. Examples of laxatives: Lactulose/Coloxyl and Senna®/Coloxyl®/Movicol®.

- You cannot become addicted to paracetamol or anti-inflammatory medications.
- Addiction to opioid medicines is unlikely when used for a few days after a caesarean.
- If you are allergic to any of these medicines, do not take them. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about other choices.

If you have any further questions or if there is something you do not understand, please ask your doctor, pharmacist or midwife/nurse.

Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact:

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