

# Children's pain relief (analgesia)

## Information for patients, parents and guardians

After your child's operation, we will make sure your child's pain is managed effectively. Your nurse will discuss pain relief with you and your child when you are preparing to leave hospital. We hope this factsheet will help to answer some of your questions about the most common types of pain relief.

### **Paracetamol**

Paracetamol is effective for relieving mild pain.

It is available in liquid suspension, tablets, soluble tablets and suppositories.

Paracetamol usually starts to work in 30 to 60 minutes and can last up to six hours. Do not give more than four doses in a 24 hour period.

### **Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs**

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are used to relieve mild to moderate pain and can reduce inflammation.

NSAIDs usually work within one to two hours and can last up to eight hours. NSAIDs can be given at the same time as other analgesia and they should be given with food or milk.

The most commonly used NSAID is Ibuprofen which is available in liquid suspension and tablets.

In some cases, your child may be prescribed a different NSAID called Diclofenac. This is available in tablets, liquid or suppository form.

### **Opioid analgesia**

Opioids are very effective analgesia. Parents can be concerned about giving their child opioids as they are aware of possible addiction. Addiction is not an issue when used for pain control.

**Morphine:** this is an opioid used to treat moderate to severe pain. It is available in tablets or liquid form.

**Oxycodone:** this is an opioid used to treat moderate to severe pain. It is available in tablets or liquid form. Oxycodone is used for children over the age of three who cannot tolerate morphine. Oxycodone is unlicensed for the under 12s. This does not mean that it cannot be safely used for younger children. Please refer to: [www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk/unlicensed-medicines](http://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk/unlicensed-medicines) for more information.

**Dihydrocodeine:** this is a weak opioid used to treat moderate pain. It is available in tablet or liquid form. This analgesia takes 30 to 60 minutes to work and lasts for about six hours.

Opioid analgesia can make your child feel drowsy so you should ensure they are supervised closely while they are taking these medications and do not use any high play equipment.

Nausea is a common side effect and constipation can also be an issue. Drinking plenty of fluids and eating a fibre-rich diet will help with this. Your child may also be prescribed mild laxatives.

### **Pain relief dosages**

The dosages for analgesia will vary depending on your child's age and weight.

Your nurse will advise you on how much to give and when before you leave hospital.

Paracetamol, Ibuprofen and an opioid can be given at the same time as these are different drug families. You can also alternate the analgesia as long as you do not exceed the daily recommended dose.

### **Discharge medication**

Paracetamol

Dose \_\_\_\_\_ up to 4 times in 24 hours

Ibuprofen

Dose \_\_\_\_\_ up to 3 times in 24 hours

Other discharge analgesia

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