

Adjuvant Pain Medicines

Some medicines may be included in your pain management plan because they will reduce your need for stronger opioid-based medicines (such as morphine or oxycodone).

We call these ‘adjuvant pain medicines’.

Not all adjuvant pain medicines are suitable for all patients, or for all types of pain. Your healthcare team will consider multiple factors and recommend specific medicines based on your individual needs and the type of pain you are experiencing.

Key messages about pain medicines

- ▶ Your pain medicines form part of a pain management plan agreed to by you and your healthcare team. You should know what medicines you are taking and ask questions about when your medicines need to be reviewed, changed or stopped.
- ▶ All medicines have the potential to cause side effects. Your healthcare team will tell you how best to manage side effects, or may suggest changes to your medicines if your side effects are a problem.
- ▶ Avoid drinking alcohol while using pain medicines, as it may cause or worsen side effects such as drowsiness, dizziness, and confusion.
- ▶ If you feel that you are not getting enough pain relief with your medicines, do not increase your doses or start other pain medicines without speaking to a member of your healthcare team.
- ▶ It is important to let your healthcare team know if you experience a sudden worsening of your pain, a new type of pain or pain in a new area of your body.

Paracetamol

Paracetamol can be used on its own for mild to moderate pain, or in combination with other medicines for severe pain.

Paracetamol is a very safe medicine when used at prescribed doses, but it can be dangerous if you accidentally take too much. Please remember:

- ▶ The maximum dose of paracetamol for most people is 4 grams (= 8 regular paracetamol tablets OR 6 Panadol Osteo tablets) per 24 hours. Your healthcare team may suggest a lower maximum dose in some cases.
- ▶ Always check if other medicines you use for pain, fever or ‘cold & flu’ contain paracetamol as an ingredient.

Paracetamol is commonly known by brand names Panadol® and Panamax®, and an oral liquid can be used if you have difficulty swallowing tablets.

Clonidine

Clonidine has a variety of different uses, including treatment of high blood pressure. It may be prescribed for pain relief and some patients also say that this medicine makes them feel calm.

Please remember:

- ▶ This medicine can lower your blood pressure and heart rate. Some people may experience dizziness or light-headedness as a side effect. Do not drive or stand up too quickly until you know how this medicine affects you.
- ▶ As your pain improves, your healthcare team will discuss your options for stopping these medicines. In most circumstances, this medicine needs to be reduced slowly. Stopping this medicine too quickly can cause a rebound increase in your blood pressure.

Clonidine is commonly known by the brand name Catapres®, however other brands are available.

Antidepressants

Antidepressants are usually prescribed to treat depression and anxiety, but some can also be prescribed for nerve pain. Trialling low doses of these medicines as part of your pain management plan does not mean that you have depression.

Sometimes we can use certain antidepressant side effects to our advantage. For example, an antidepressant that makes you feel drowsy can be taken at bedtime and will assist with sleep.

- ▶ These medicines do not provide immediate pain relief after each dose. It may take up to a week or so of taking your medicine for you to feel an improvement in your pain.
- ▶ These medicines can make you dizzy, drowsy or confused. This is more likely to occur when you are starting your treatment, have had a dose increase, or are taking other medicines that can also have these side effects.

Your healthcare team may recommend ONE of the following antidepressants:

- Amitriptyline (*Endep® and other brands*)
- Nortriptyline (*Allegron® and other brands*)
- Duloxetine (*Cymbalta® and other brands*)

Gabapentinoids

Gabapentinoids were originally developed to control seizures but they are also useful treatments for nerve pain. They work by affecting the way pain signals from your nerves are sent to your brain. Please remember:

- ▶ These medicines do not provide immediate pain relief after each dose. It may take up to a week or so of taking your medicine for you to feel an improvement in your pain.
- ▶ These medicines can make you dizzy, drowsy or confused. This is more likely to occur when you are starting your treatment, have had a dose increase, or are taking other medicines that can also have these side effects.
- ▶ Increasing the dose of these medicines too quickly, or stopping too suddenly, can cause serious side effects. Do not change your dose unless told to do so by your healthcare team.

Your healthcare team may recommend ONE of the following gabapentinoids:

- gabapentin (*Neurontin® and other brands*)
- pregabalin (*Lyrica® and other brands*)

Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

NSAIDs can help relieve pain and reduce inflammation that may be contributing to your pain. Please remember:

- ▶ Only use one type of NSAID at a time.
- ▶ It is best to take your NSAID doses with food. This reduces the chance of experiencing side effects such as stomach upset.
- ▶ NSAIDs are not suitable for all patients, and must be used carefully in patients with certain health conditions. Do not take more than the dose that is prescribed to you.

Your healthcare team may recommend ONE of the following NSAIDs:

- ibuprofen (*Nurofen® and other brands*)
- diclofenac (*Voltaren® and other brands*)
- naproxen (*Naprogesic® and other brands*)
- indometacin (*Arthrexin®, Indocid®*)
- meloxicam (*Mobic® and other brands*)
- celecoxib (*Celebrex® and other brands*)

These medicines are usually used short-term but may be used longer-term in certain circumstances. Please speak to your healthcare team about how long you should be using your NSAID medicine.



Reviewed By
St George Hospital
Consumer Advisory Group
Working together

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