

# Managing your pain after injury or surgery

## Why treat pain?

It is normal for you to have pain after an injury or surgery. Your pain will be treated for a short time with medicine. Treating pain helps you move around, take deep breaths and be more comfortable. It helps you recover from your injury or surgery.

## What medicines should you use?

For mild to moderate pain, you can take medicines that you can buy at your pharmacy without prescriptions e.g. paracetamol or an anti-inflammatory. For severe pain, opioid medicines may be used. You will need a prescription for these medicines.

## What is an opioid?

Opioids are strong pain medicines taken to reduce severe pain.

## How long should I use the opioid medicines for?

You should only take opioid medicines for a short period of time, **normally no more than 1 week**. These medicines work well for short-term pain, but they can also have side effects.

## What are the common side effects of opioids?

Side effects are unwanted effects of a medicine on your body. The side effects of opioid medicines include sleepiness, dizziness, itch, dry mouth, nausea and vomiting. Constipation is also very common when taking opioid medicines. Talk to your doctor if this affects you.

## Can I take too much of my opioid medicines?

If you take too much you may feel sleepy or not be able to stay awake. The risk of this happening is worse if you drink alcohol or take other medicines that make you sleepy. Also, do not drive when you are taking opioid medicines as they can make you sleepy.

Tell your family what signs to look for such as slow, shallow or noisy breathing and difficulty staying awake. If this happens, it is an emergency. Visit the nearest emergency department or call 000.

## Your pain medicine plan

Take your pain medicines as prescribed. Pain medicines that you may have been given:

Paracetamol .....

Anti-inflammatory.....

Opioid for severe pain.....

If you have been asked to take other medicines, take them in combination with your opioid medicine. You should try to take a little less opioid medicine each day. The opioid medicine should be the first pain medicine you stop taking.

Other.....

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### Caution when taking pain medicines:

- Keep them out of reach of children and pets
- Do not share your pain medicines with others
- Take them back to the pharmacy when they are no longer needed

### What other things can I do to help with my pain?

Speak to your health care team about:

- Gentle exercises
- Gentle stretches or massage for muscle pain
- If you have had surgery on your leg or arm, keep it raised after surgery
- Apply an ice pack to reduce swelling and pain

### Where can I find more information?

- Talk to your regular doctor or pharmacist
- NPS Medicines Line on 1300 633 424
- Health Direct website: [www.healthdirect.gov.au/taking-opioid-medicines-safely](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/taking-opioid-medicines-safely)

