

Sleepiness: Opioids can make you sleepy and confused, especially when you first start to take them.

Please contact your doctor or seek medical advice if side effects become a problem, or if you are feeling muddled, or are unsteady on your feet, as your prescription may need to be changed.

WHEN I GO HOME...

CAN I DRIVE?

You should not drive (or operate heavy machinery) if:

- you have just started taking an opioid
- your dose has just increased and/or you feel sleepy
- your concentration is poor
- you are feeling weak or in pain
- the light is low or at night (as some opioids can make seeing in the dark more difficult)
- you are taking any other medicines that can cause sleepiness.

Always discuss with your doctor if you are safe to drive first.

CAN I DRINK ALCOHOL?

Do NOT drink alcohol while you are taking opioids.

HOW SHOULD I STORE MY OPIOID MEDICINE?

Store your medicine in a cool dry place, out of direct sunlight. As with all medicines, opioids can be dangerous if taken by other people for whom it was not intended.

To reduce this risk:

- store in a safe place, out of sight and out of reach of others, especially children
- do not share with others even if they have pain
- return all unused and unneeded medication to your Pharmacy.

SIMPLE NUTRITION TIPS TO MANAGE CONSTIPATION IN HOSPITAL

Increase your dietary fibre

Choose fresh or stewed fruit, wholemeal bread, weetbix or porridge, vegetable and salad options on the menu. Maybe have family or friends bring in some fresh or dried fruits, muesli bars, nuts and seeds as a snack.

Increase your fluid intake – keep well hydrated

Aim to drink at least eight cups of fluid during the day. This may include water, juice, milk, soup, tea, coffee, hot chocolate and nutritional drinks.

Consider 'kiwi crush' drinks; ask your nurse if this will be suitable for you.

Contact your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you need further clarification.



THIS LEAFLET PROVIDES INFORMATION ON OPIOID PAIN RELIEF FOR ADULT PATIENTS IN HOSPITAL

WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

Opioids are medicines used to manage moderate to severe pain. There are many different types of opioid pain medicines which include Codeine, Dihydrocodeine, Tramadol, Morphine, Oxycodone, Methadone and Fentanyl.

HOW DO I TAKE OPIOIDS?

When you are first prescribed an opioid, you will probably start taking fast-acting tablet or liquid. Fast-acting tablets or liquids work quickly and you should get pain relief within 30 minutes. You should only take your fast-acting tablet if you really need it to manage worsening or break through pain as prescribed.

If you need to take opioids more regularly or for a longer period of time, you may be prescribed a long-acting tablet or capsule, once or twice a day. Sometimes fentanyl patches are used for pain management. These release pain medicine through the skin. Patches should be applied to clean dry skin and are changed every three days.

Your doctor will advise you about how to take any fast-acting opioid if you have pain breaking through after a long-acting tablet has been started.

HOW MUCH DO I TAKE?

Your doctor/nurse/pharmacist will advise you about how to take your opioids. With all opioid medications take only as directed – do not crush or chew tablets/capsules.

IF PAIN PERSISTS

Speak with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you are still experiencing pain.

HOW LONG WILL I NEED TO TAKE OPIOIDS?

This depends on the nature of your pain. It is unusual for opioids to be beneficial for more than around two weeks after acute injury or surgery, so a plan to reduce or come off your opioids should be made before you leave hospital. However, in some circumstances, opioids may be required for a longer period of time and this should be assessed on a regular basis by a registered health practitioner, ie doctor.

WILL I BECOME ADDICTED?

Many people worry about this. When used for short-term relief of pain due to surgery or physical injury, addiction is not usually a problem. Please ask your doctor/nurse or pharmacist for more information if you are concerned.

If you feel you are at risk of becoming addicted to the medicine or you feel it is no longer working, please discuss this with your doctor as they will be able to come up with an alternative plan.

If you have been taking opioids for a long time, your doctor may reduce the amount you are given, slowly before stopping.

CAN I TAKE OTHER MEDICINES?

Do not take any medicines other than those given to you by the ward nurse without telling your doctor or nurse. This includes herbal remedies, rongoā, inhalers, creams or if you have any allergies or medical conditions.

All medicines have side effects and contraindications. There are specific situations in which a medicine or combinations of medicines should not be used.

You may require other pain medicines such as paracetamol or an anti-inflammatory medicine such as diclofenac or ibuprofen as well as your opioid. This will depend on the nature and severity of your pain.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON SIDE EFFECTS OF OPIOIDS?

Constipation: This is very common. Eating high fibre foods such as fruit, vegetables, whole grains and drinking plenty of fluid helps. Your doctor may also prescribe medication such as laxatives to keep your bowels moving.

Keeping active and mobile could help prevent constipation.

Feeling sick (nausea): This can happen for a few days after starting opioids or when increasing your dose. It usually settles quickly. Anti-sickness medication can help if needed.

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