

# Managing your child's pain at home after surgery

This leaflet explains more about pain relief for your child once you leave hospital. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

## What should we expect when we get home?

Your child would have been given pain medicines when he or she was in hospital but these will wear off when you get home. Your child may therefore experience different types of pain.

- Sore throat or headache. This is common just after an operation. The pain should be mild, easily treated with paracetamol and go away within the first 24 hours.
- Pain at the site of the operation. This pain may be mild, moderate or severe and you may need to use several different types of painkiller together to make it better. Children who have received a local anaesthetic injection while asleep may not have any pain when they first wake up. However when the local anaesthetic wears off your child may start to feel some pain.

## How can I tell if my child is in pain?

Children who are old enough will be able to tell you that they are in pain. It is more difficult to tell with much younger children but their behaviour can be an indication. You may find this table useful (you do not need to complete it). Give 0 or 1 point for each item in the list below and then add them together to give a total score. If the total score is 6 or more you should think about giving your child some pain medicines. Please seek medical attention if your child does not improve or if you are worried these behaviours are not pain related.

<b>My child's behaviour</b>	<b>Yes – 1 point No – 0 points</b>
Complains more than usual?	
Cries more easily than usual?	
Plays less than usual?	
Does not do the things he/she normally does?	
Acts more worried than usual?	
Quieter than usual?	
Has less energy than usual?	
Holds the sore part of his/her body?	
Tries not to bump the sore part?	
Groans or moans more than usual?	
Looks more flushed than usual?	
Wants to be close to you more?	
Takes medicines that they usually refuse?	
<b>Total score</b>	

(Chambers C et al. Pain 2003; 105; 437-445)

## What can I do to relieve my child's pain?

The hospital will give you information about what pain medicines to use. Give the pain medicines following this advice and the instructions on the bottle. Remember that after surgery:

- pain medicines should be given regularly
- different types of pain medicines work well together
- do not wait for the pain to get very bad before you give your child pain medicines
- giving pain medicines at bedtime will help your child to sleep through the night.

## How long should I give pain medicines for?

Children are not all the same about how much pain they feel. In general, you should give pain medicines for as long as your child is complaining of pain. When the pain is bad, you should give the pain medicines as regularly as the instructions allow you to. You may need to do this for several days, or as advised. After that, you should give pain medicines when your child complains of pain.

## Is it alright to give my child more than one painkiller at the same time?

It is fine to give your child a combination of different pain medicines, for example paracetamol and ibuprofen can be given together.

Some medicines are available as a number of different brands, which can be confusing. For example, various different brands of paracetamol are available (eg Calpol®, Disprol®). You should take care not to give your child **different brands of the same medicine at the same time**. Please also be aware that paracetamol may be an ingredient of combination medicines, for example cold relief medicines. You should therefore not give these to your child if they are taking paracetamol, as you risk giving them too much.

Please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you are in any doubt.

## What are the possible risks and side effects?

You must tell your doctor/nurse if your child is known to be allergic to any medicines or has any medical conditions. The doctor or pharmacist will advise you if you should not give any particular pain medicines. You should also let them know if your child is taking any other medicines, so that they can check that the pain medicines do not interact with them.

You should not worry about giving your child pain medicines to make his or her pain less. He/she will not become addicted to the medicines, and they will not slow down healing. He or she will feel much better if they are not in pain.

The most common side effects of ibuprofen are slight diarrhoea or slight tummy ache. Ibuprofen should be given with food to reduce the chances of this happening. If your child develops severe stomach pains or has blood in their stomach or stools, then this may be a sign of an ulcer. If this happens you should take them to hospital straight away. Some children may have a mild allergic reaction to ibuprofen developing an itchy rash, unexplained wheezing, worsening of any asthma or shortness of breath. If your child shows any signs of a mild allergic reaction to ibuprofen with any of the symptoms listed above, stop giving the medicine and tell your GP. Ibuprofen may make asthma worse in some children but this is uncommon.

Paracetamol rarely causes side effects when given at the correct dosage. It may very rarely cause a rash – if this happens to your child, stop giving the medicine and tell your GP.

For further information on the possible side effects of pain medicines, please see the manufacturer's information leaflet that comes with the medicine. If you have any concerns about side effects, please contact your GP or speak to one of the Evelina pharmacy team on 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm.

### **What do I do if I have given my child too much?**

It is important that you follow the instructions on the bottle and you do not exceed the recommended dose of painkiller, or give it any more often than the instructions tell you to. Do not give two doses of the same medicine at the same time.

One additional dose of ibuprofen in a day is unlikely to cause any problems, however if this happens then you must wait at least 12 hours before giving another dose. If you are concerned that you may have given more than one extra dose, please contact the Evelina pharmacy team, **t:** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm. Out of hours please call NHS 111.

Paracetamol can be harmful if too much is taken (overdose). Although the effects of an overdose may not be obvious, they can be serious and need treatment. If you have given your child more than the recommended amount, either as a single dose or during a 24 hour period, please contact your local emergency department (A&E) as soon as you realise. There are other types of medicine containing paracetamol such as cold relief medicines, so it is important to count these in any doses given in a 24 hour period.

### **What if I forget to give a dose?**

If your child is in pain, give the missed dose as soon as you remember. For paracetamol, you must then wait at least four hours before giving the next dose. For ibuprofen, you must then wait at least six hours before giving the next dose. **Do not give a double dose under any circumstances.**

## What should I do if my child is still in pain?

Regular pain medicines given together before your child's pain becomes severe should help control your child's pain. If your child is still in pain, you should contact your GP or speak to the nurse in charge on the ward your child was treated.

The following chart can be used to help you keep a record of the painkilling medicines given to your child:

<b>Paracetamol</b>	<b>Day 1 Time:</b>	<b>Day 2 Time:</b>	<b>Day 3 Time:</b>	<b>Day 4 Time:</b>
<b>Do not</b> take with other medicines containing paracetamol. Take every four to six hours. No more than four doses in 24 hours.				

<b>Ibuprofen</b>	<b>Day 1 Time:</b>	<b>Day 2 Time:</b>	<b>Day 3 Time:</b>	<b>Day 4 Time:</b>
Should be taken <b>with</b> or <b>after</b> food. Take every six to eight hours. No more than three doses in 24 hours.				

NB: you can print additional copies of these charts or create your own if your child needs pain relieving medicines for more than four days.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's pain control, please contact the nurse in charge on Beach ward on **t:** 020 7188 8844, Savannah ward on **t:** 020 7188 8848 or Mountain ward on **t:** 020 7188 8852.

If you have any questions regarding the use or side effects of medicines, please contact the Evelina pharmacy team on **t:** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm.

## Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm

**e:** [letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS)      **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)      **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

**t:** 020 7188 8815      **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111

## NHS website

Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.

**t:** 0800 731 0319      **e:** [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk)      **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)

## Was this leaflet useful?

We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we would be happy to hear from you; fill in our simple online form, **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets), or **e:** [patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk)

**Leaflet number: 3708/VER2**

Date published: January 2019

Review date: January 2022

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A list of sources is available on request