

# 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 questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for your child.

## What to expect when you leave hospital

Your child will have been given painkillers when they were in hospital, but these will wear off. Your child might have different types of pain.

### Sore throat or headache

This is common just after surgery. The pain should be mild, and easily treated with paracetamol. It should go away within the first 24 hours.

### Pain at the site of the operation

This pain can be mild, moderate or severe and you might need to use several different types of painkiller together to make it better. Children who have received a local anaesthetic injection while asleep might not have any pain when they wake up. However, when the local anaesthetic wears off, your child might start to feel some pain.

## How to tell if your child is in pain

Older children can tell you they are in pain. It is more difficult to tell with younger children, but their behaviour can be an indication. You might find this table useful (you do not have to complete it). Give 0 or 1 point for each item in the list below and add them up to give a total score.

My child's behaviour	Yes = 1 point	No = 0 points
Complains more than usual?		
Cries more easily than usual?		
Plays less than usual?		
Does not do the things they normally do?		
Acts more worried than usual?		
Quieter than usual?		
Has less energy than usual?		
Holds the sore part of their 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)

If the total score is 6 or more you should think about giving your child some painkillers. Please seek medical attention if your child does not improve, or if you are worried these behaviours are not pain related.

## What to do to relieve your child's pain

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

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

## How long to give painkillers

Each child feels pain differently. In general, you should give painkillers for as long as your child is complaining of pain. When the pain is bad, you should give the painkillers as regularly as the instructions allow you to. You might need to do this for several days, or as advised. After that, you should give painkillers only when your child complains of pain.

## Giving your child more than one painkiller at the same time

It is OK to give your child a combination of different painkillers. 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, different brands of paracetamol are available (such as Calpol<sup>®</sup>, and Disprol<sup>®</sup>). 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 is often an ingredient of combination medicines, for example cold relief medicines. You should therefore not give these to your child if they are already taking paracetamol, as you risk giving them too much.

Please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you are unsure.

## Risks and side effects

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

You should not worry about giving your child painkillers to ease their pain. They will not become addicted to the medicines, and they will not slow down healing. They will feel much better if they are not in pain.

The most common side effects of ibuprofen are slight diarrhoea or tummy ache. Ibuprofen should be given with food to reduce the chances of this happening. If your child has severe tummy pains, or is sick and there is blood in it, or if they have blood in their poo (stools), this might be a sign of an ulcer. If this happens you should take them to hospital immediately.

Some children have a mild allergic reaction to ibuprofen. This might show as an itchy rash, unexplained wheezing, shortness of breath, or their asthma getting worse. If your child shows any signs of a mild allergic reaction to ibuprofen with any of these symptoms, stop giving the medicine and tell your GP. Ibuprofen can make asthma worse in some children but this is uncommon.

Paracetamol rarely causes side effects when given at the correct dosage. Very rarely it can cause a rash. If this happens, stop giving the medicine and tell your GP.

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

## If you give your child too much

### Ibuprofen

It is important that you follow the instructions on the packet. You should not give more than the recommended dose of painkiller, or give it any more often than the instructions advise. Do not give 2 doses of the same medicine at the same time.

An extra dose of ibuprofen in a day is unlikely to cause any problems, but if this happens you must wait at least 12 hours before giving another dose. If you are concerned that you might have given more than 1 extra dose, please contact the Evelina pharmacy team, **phone** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm. Out of hours please contact NHS 111.

### Paracetamol

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

## If you forget to give a dose

If your child is in pain, give the missed dose as soon as you remember. You must keep doses of paracetamol at least 4 hours apart and doses of ibuprofen at least 6 hours apart. **Never give a double dose under any circumstances.**

## If your child is still in pain

Regular painkillers 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 where your child was treated.

These charts can be used to help you keep a record of the painkillers given to your child.

**Paracetamol**

**Do not** take with other medicines containing paracetamol. Take every 4 to 6 hours. No more than 4 doses in 24 hours.

	<b>Day 1,</b> Date .....	<b>Day 2</b> Date .....	<b>Day 3</b> Date .....	<b>Day 4</b> Date .....
<b>Time</b>				
<b>Time</b>				
<b>Time</b>				
<b>Time</b>				

**Ibuprofen**

Should be taken **with** or **after** food. Take every 6 to 8 hours. No more than 3 doses in 24 hours.

	<b>Day 1,</b> Date .....	<b>Day 2</b> Date .....	<b>Day 3</b> Date .....	<b>Day 4</b> Date .....
<b>Time</b>				
<b>Time</b>				
<b>Time</b>				
<b>Time</b>				

Please note that you can print extra copies of these charts or create your own if your child needs painkillers for more than 4 days.

## Contact us

If you have any questions about your child's pain control, please contact the nurse in charge on:

**Beach ward**, [phone](tel:02071888844) 020 7188 8844

**Savannah ward**, [phone](tel:02071888848) 020 7188 8848

**Mountain ward**, [phone](tel:02071888852) 020 7188 8852

**Sky ward**, [phone](tel:02071888956) 020 7188 8956

If you have any questions about the use or side effects of medicines, please contact the Evelina pharmacy team, [phone](tel:02071883003) 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm.

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [web](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets) [www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## 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, [phone](tel:02071883003) 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm  
[mail](mailto:letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk) [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), [phone](tel:02071888801) 020 7188 8801 [email](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk) [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk). To make a complaint contact the complaints department [phone](tel:02071883514) 020 7188 3514 [email](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk) [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, [phone](tel:02071888815) 020 7188 8815 [email](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk) [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day, [phone](tel:111) 111  
[web](http://www.111.nhs.uk) [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk)

## NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing, [web](http://www.nhs.uk) [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, [phone](tel:08007310319) 0800 731 0319 [email](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk) [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk)  
[web](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership) [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)

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