

HELPING CHILDREN WITH PAIN

Using medicines at home for acute pain

Aim: This leaflet has been written to help parents or caregivers manage their child's short-term pain. This leaflet does not apply to children under 1 year old.

Who needs pain relief? A child in your care may have had an operation or a painful injury such as a broken bone. **This pain is expected to get better after a few days.** Using readily available over the counter medications in a regular dose can provide good pain relief.

How to use medicines

1 Give the correct dose Give the recommended dose for the age or weight of your child. This is on the packet or bottle. If you have difficulty working out the correct dose for your child please consult your Doctor or Pharmacist. **Always use an accurate measuring spoon or syringe.**

Your general practitioner or hospital doctor may adjust this dose, depending on the health of your child.

“Everybody responds to pain in different ways and there is no single method or recipe that will work for us all.”



COMBINING DRUGS FROM DIFFERENT GROUPS GIVES BETTER PAIN RELIEF

Combining drugs, for example, regular paracetamol and a regular non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) will work better than either drug on its own.

Do not give more than one drug from each group eg paracetamol together with ibuprofen is safe, but diclofenac with ibuprofen is not recommended because they are both from the same group.

So, if paracetamol given every 4 hours, up to six times a day, is not enough, then your child may also be able to take an NSAID. Both paracetamol and an NSAID may be needed for the first day or so after an operation or fracture (broken bone). The only NSAID sold in Pharmacies for use in New Zealand for children under 12 years old is ibuprofen liquid, which is given 3 times a day.

If your child cannot take NSAIDs, eg because of asthma, or allergy, then codeine and paracetamol or tramadol and paracetamol may be used.

For severe pain, medication from all three groups may be used, only in consultation with your doctor

Where can I get these medications?

- **Codeine** and **tramadol** need a doctor's prescription. They will have the correct dose for your child on the packet.

- You can buy **paracetamol** and some **NSAIDs** from your pharmacist without a prescription.

- **Paracetamol**; as liquid or elixir (trade names Pamol, Parapaed, Paracare) for little children and those who cannot swallow tablets. Paracetamol tablets and capsules (e.g. Panadol or Paracare) for older children, and paracetamol soluble for older children who cannot swallow tablets.

- **NSAIDs**; **ibuprofen** liquid (trade names Nurofen for Children or Fenpaed Oral Suspension) ibuprofen tablets or capsules can be bought for children over 12. Diclofenac tablets (Cataflam) can be bought for children over 14 years.

Always make sure your child drinks plenty of water if they are taking NSAIDs

Wouldn't it be simpler to take pain killers that are already mixed together?

(Eg Mersyndol, Panadeine) These are not recommended for children.

SUGGESTED DOSES FOR

NAME OF CHILD

YOUR CHILD'S WEIGHT IN KG

• **IBUPROFEN DOSE** _____ mls of 100mg/5mls
EVERY _____ HOURS

• **PARACETAMOL DOSE** _____ mls of _____ mg/ml
EVERY _____ HOURS

2 Give it regularly If anybody has pain that is going to last a few days, then pain relief should be given regularly. For example, paracetamol (Trade names Pamol, Disprol, Panadol, Paracare) should be given every 4 hours up to the recommended maximum daily dose of 90mg/kg/day

3 Use a combination of medications. Pain medications can be grouped according to the way that they work.

There are 3 commonly used groups.

1 Paracetamol

2 Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) eg ibuprofen or diclofenac.

3 Mild opiates (On prescription only), eg codeine and tramadol. (Trade name Tramal, for children over 2 years old only)

If your child has...

- **Mild to Moderate Pain** Take regular paracetamol or NSAID. Soluble medicines or elixirs work faster than tablets or capsules.
- **Moderate Pain** Take regular paracetamol and a regular NSAID (ibuprofen or diclofenac) or paracetamol and a regular mild opiate (eg codeine or tramadol).

When should we see a doctor?

- **Severe Pain** If pain is not controlled despite regular paracetamol and a regular NSAID or other painkiller eg tramadol or codeine, take your child to a doctor soon.
- **Prolonged pain** If pain lasts more than a few days.
- **Other problems** eg. oozing wound, poor circulation in fingers in a plaster or dressing or any other worries.

WARNINGS

- Remember to read the instructions on the packet or bottle carefully and do not give medications or prescription drugs if you are unsure about the dose or if you think that your child may fit into the group of people for whom the medicine or drug is potentially dangerous.
- **Cautions with Paracetamol** Always read the instructions on the packet and ask for help (eg from your doctor or pharmacist) if you are unsure. Children with liver disease should avoid Paracetamol. With kidney disease paracetamol may need to be given every 6-8 hours, not 4 hourly.
- **Do not give your child cold remedies at the same time, many have paracetamol in them.**
- **More About NSAIDs / Anti-inflammatory drugs.** Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) commonly used for children include Ibuprofen (Brufen, Nurofen, Panafen) and Diclofenac (eg trade names Voltaren, Cataflam, Diclac). Indomethacin (Indocid) and Naprosyn (Naprogesic, Naproxen) are also some times

used, but only on prescription. Your child should only take one drug from this group.

- **Aspirin should never be given to children**
- **Cautions with NSAIDs Anti-inflammatory drugs** Some people should not take NSAIDs / Anti-inflammatory drugs. These include those allergic to NSAIDs, some asthmatics, children with kidney disease, liver disease or heart failure, some diabetics and children with stomach or duodenal ulcers. Children taking Warfarin or with bleeding problems should also avoid NSAIDs. If your child fits any of these descriptions please talk it over with your Doctor or Nurse, who will suggest other options.
- **Codeine** This is a mild opiate. It should be used with paracetamol, as codeine is not very effective on its own. Codeine is taken every 4-6 hours up to 3 times a day, whilst paracetamol is taken every 4 hours. They are not taken exactly at the same time, just on the same day to work best. Codeine's main side effect is constipation, which can be reduced or prevented by a high fruit and fibre intake.



Medicines are only one way to manage pain.

There are many other ways to help children with pain, such as playing, distraction, reducing anxiety by comforting touch, being with favourite people and using relaxation. Please see the Poster "Helping Children With Pain, Hei awhi ki nga tamariki mameae"



New Zealand Pain Society
References, The World Health Organisation, MIMS, IASP, Starship Children's Hospital.
Please copy, or download from nzps.org.nz

