

Medication in chronic pain

The benefit from taking medication should always be more than any side effects you may have. Only you –

- know how bad your pain is
- are able to say if your medicine is helping know
- what side effects you are having

It may take a few weeks or several trials of different medications to find the best combination for you and your pain. It may help to keep a diary of your pain and other symptoms. Side effects often become less once you have been on a medicine for a few days.

Please read the patient information sheet given with each medication. It gives more information about the medicine and any side effects.

You can discuss your pain medication with your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist, they can –

- Give you advice on which pain medicines may help.
- Help you find the best way to take your medicines.
- Advise you on increasing your dose safely if your pain is worse and on taking less medication safely when your pain is more settled.

If your medicine is not helping, or if the risks outweigh the benefits, it may be sensible to stop taking it. Please talk to your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist first. Some pain medicines should not be stopped suddenly.

Do not share or take other peoples medication. Always advise your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist about any other medication or products you are taking for chronic pain. This includes anything bought from the pharmacy, herbal supplements or other medicines that aren't prescribed for you.

Understanding your pain and medication can help you to get the best pain relief with the least side-effects

FIFE PAIN MEDICINES PATIENT SAFETY PROGRAMME



Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs

Patient Information Leaflet

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NHS Fife SMS text service number **07805800005** is available for people who have a hearing or speech impairment.

To find out more about accessible formats contact:
fife-UHB.EqualityandHumanRights@nhs.net
or phone **01592 729130**

Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

NSAIDs are medications that can reduce swelling around joints and nerve endings to give pain relief. They are particularly useful in treating inflammatory type pain.

Two commonly prescribed NSAIDs are ibuprofen and naproxen.

This leaflet gives information on NSAID medication taken by mouth (orally). NSAIDs can cause side-effects and alternatives such as paracetamol tablets or an NSAID gel that you rub on a specific area may be recommended.

Other treatments such as heat/cold packs or TENs can be helpful. It is also useful to have an exercise plan and pace your daily activities.

Are there any side effects?

All medications can cause side effects but not everyone will get them. A full list is in the patient information sheet with your prescription. If you experience any prolonged or unexpected side-effects speak to your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist.

The most common side effects with NSAIDs are irritation of the stomach causing indigestion like symptoms or a feeling of sickness. This effect can be reduced by remembering to take your NSAID with or after food. You may also be prescribed a medication (e.g. omeprazole) to help lessen the risk of stomach problems. You should take this medication every day while taking a NSAID.

NSAIDs are less suitable medicines for people with asthma, a heart condition, high blood pressure, kidney problems or have had previous stomach ulcers or bleeding. You should let your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist know before taking a NSAID if you have any of these conditions.

NSAIDs can cause kidney problems especially if they are used for a long time at high doses. A blood test may be required to check this.

NSAIDs can increase the risk of heart problems and increase blood pressure. Some NSAIDs are not recommended to be taken in people who already have heart conditions.

If you have asthma and it gets worse, stop taking your NSAID and contact your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist for advice.

What dose and for how long?

If an oral NSAID is prescribed then it's important to use the lowest effective dose for the shortest possible period of time.

This varies for different people and therefore NSAID treatment should be regularly reviewed to ensure the benefits outweigh any side effects or risks. NSAIDs should not routinely be continued long term.

In many chronic pain conditions there is often no ongoing inflammation. Some chronic pain conditions (e.g. osteoarthritis) only have inflammatory pain part of time, so only use a NSAID during an inflammatory "flare-up" when you are experiencing more pain and symptoms of inflammation like swelling and heat. Some rheumatological conditions may require longer term use.

Monitoring of blood pressure and kidney function is recommended when NSAIDs are taken regularly.

Other information

If you are breastfeeding, pregnant or likely to become pregnant, you should let your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist know.

NSAIDs can interact with other medications. These include warfarin, lithium and medications used in the treatment of high blood pressure.