

# Pain Relievers

## also known as painkillers or analgesics

**Different types of pain relieving medicines are available for treating different types of pain. Pharmacists and doctors can advise you on the best pain relievers for your pain.**

When an area of the body is damaged or stressed, nerves from the affected area carry a message to the brain, which we call pain. Pain is an unpleasant sensation or feeling that may be mild or severe, sharp or dull and acute or chronic.

### Acute pain

Acute pain is pain that comes on suddenly and lasts for a limited time. It may be mild or severe and may last a few minutes, hours, days or weeks. Examples of acute pain include insect bites, headaches, burns and broken bones.

### Chronic pain

When pain lasts for longer than three months, it is called chronic pain. Chronic pain may be due to a chronic medical condition (e.g. arthritis), but

sometimes the cause isn't known. Sometimes chronic pain is due to a problem with nerve function. A nerve sends pain messages to the brain even though there may not be any tissue damage. This type of nerve pain is called neuropathic pain.

### Using pain relievers

Pain relieving medicines don't always stop all pain, but can reduce pain to a level that does not affect daily life. There are a number of different types of pain relievers that work in different ways and suit different types of pain. The choice of a pain reliever and how well it relieves the pain depend on a number of things including:

- The type of pain, where it is occurring and how strong it is

- The form of pain reliever. Pain relievers are available in a variety of different forms including soluble tablets, immediate-release tablets, slow-release tablets, mixtures, injections, creams, gels and patches
- How often the pain reliever is used. Sometimes it is better to use pain relievers at regular intervals 'by the clock', rather than 'as needed'
- A person's age, medical condition(s) and other medicines.

## Non-prescription pain relievers

Non-prescription pain relievers can be purchased from a pharmacy without a prescription.

### Paracetamol

- Relieves mild to moderate pain (e.g. headache, muscle and joint pain, sciatica).
- Reduces fever.
- Is suitable for all ages.
- Is suitable for people who are sensitive to aspirin or other NSAIDs (e.g. children, people with gastro-intestinal (gut) or kidney problems, some people with asthma).
- If used correctly, has a low risk of side effects and interactions with other medicines compared to other pain relievers.

Paracetamol is available as tablets, capsules, mixtures and suppositories.

## Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

NSAIDs include aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen and diclofenac. They:

- Relieve mild to moderate pain
- Reduce inflammation (e.g. gout, arthritis)
- Reduce fever.

NSAIDs are available as tablets, capsules, mixtures, creams and gels.

All NSAIDs may cause serious side effects. Check with a pharmacist or doctor before using NSAIDs, especially if you:

- Are sensitive to aspirin
- Are pregnant or trying to become pregnant
- Have asthma, high blood pressure, heart failure, kidney problems or gastro-intestinal problems
- Take a medicine or have a medical condition that reduces blood clotting
- Take any other medicines
- Have recently had or will be having surgery or dental work.
- Have a muscle or joint injury

Stop taking NSAIDs and seek medical advice if you have swollen ankles, breathing problems, unexplained bruising, heartburn, black faeces or coffee-coloured vomit.

### Codeine

Non-prescription pain relievers containing codeine can only be obtained from a pharmacist, who must approve and advise on their use. Codeine is available in combination with aspirin, ibuprofen or paracetamol. These codeine containing products:

- May give stronger pain relief than paracetamol, aspirin or ibuprofen alone. However, codeine is not suitable for everyone
- Are not recommended for relief of migraine
- May cause nausea, drowsiness, dizziness, constipation, breathing problems and other side effects
- Can cause dependence and withdrawal symptoms if not used correctly.

### Combination products

- Some products contain paracetamol or an NSAID combined with codeine and/or other medicines (e.g. cold and flu products, some migraine products). Always check the ingredients of combination products, in order to avoid taking an overdose of pain relievers.

### Important

Always ask a pharmacist or doctor for advice about the best pain reliever for your pain, and about the best way to use it. Using pain relievers the wrong way can be harmful.

- High doses or constant use of certain pain relievers can lead to serious kidney, liver or gastro-intestinal damage.
- Regular use of certain pain relievers (e.g. codeine) can cause physical and psychological dependence (addiction).
- Some pain relievers interact with other medicines.
- Repeated use of pain relievers for headaches may cause medication overuse headache.
- Aspirin may cause a serious adverse reaction in children. It should not be used by children under 16 years unless advised by a doctor.

- Some pain relieving products contain caffeine, which may increase the pain relieving effect of paracetamol. If you want to use these products, ask a pharmacist for advice before using other products containing caffeine (e.g. tea, coffee, cola, energy drinks, chocolate).

### Prescription pain relievers

Higher doses and stronger pain relievers can be prescribed by a doctor for more severe pain or neuropathic pain.

### Self care

- Check with a pharmacist or doctor if you need to use a pain reliever for more than three days in a row.
- Read all medicine labels and follow the directions.
- Do not take more than the recommended dose of a pain reliever. Give children the correct dose for their age and weight, according to the instructions on the label.
- Do not take pain relievers to continue working or playing sport when injured.
- Remember that pain can also be reduced by non-medicine means, (e.g. hot/cold packs, physiotherapy, TENS, relaxation, massage, exercise). Ask a doctor, pharmacist or physiotherapist for advice.
- Learn and use relaxation techniques to manage stress – especially if stress brings on pain such as headache.
- Alert your doctor, dentist and pharmacist if you are taking pain relievers regularly.

## For more information

### Healthdirect Australia

Phone: 1800 022 222

Website: [www.healthinsite.gov.au](http://www.healthinsite.gov.au)

### Consumer Medicine Information (CMI)

Your pharmacist can advise on CMI leaflets.

### National Prescribing Service (NPS) Medicines Information

Phone: 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424)

Website: [www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au)

### The Poisons Information Centre

In case of poisoning phone 13 11 26 from anywhere in Australia.

*Pharmacists are medicines experts.  
Ask a pharmacist for advice when  
choosing a medicine.*

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# Panadol®

**ALWAYS READ THE LABEL.** For temporary relief of pain and fever. Use only as directed. Incorrect use could be harmful. Consult your healthcare professional if symptoms persist.

Your Self Care Pharmacy: