

The background of the entire page is a grayscale image of various medical pills and capsules. Some are round, some are oval, and some are capsules with visible granules inside. Some have markings like 'L462' or '2967'. The image is slightly faded and serves as a backdrop for the text.

# Pain management after day surgery

Information for families

**Great Ormond Street Hospital  
for Children NHS Trust**

## My child has had an operation as a day patient, what should we expect when we get home?

Your child will have received painkillers when he or she was in the hospital, **but these will wear off** when you get home. Your child may therefore experience different types of pain:

### ■ Pain at the site of the operation:

This pain is sometimes quite bad, and you may have to use several different types of painkiller together to make it better. If your child has been given a local anaesthetic injection when they were asleep, they may not have any pain to begin with, but when the local anaesthetic wears off, they will start to feel pain.

- ### ■ Other general pains such as 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.

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

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

- Painkillers should be given **regularly**, especially if the pain is bad
- Different types of painkiller **work well together**, for instance, paracetamol and ibuprofen can be given at the same time for the strongest effect
- **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
- If your child is **still in pain** or you are concerned at the severity of pain, you should **contact the hospital to get advice**



# Frequently asked questions about postoperative pain

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

If your child is old enough, they will be able to tell you that they are in pain. It is more difficult to judge in younger children, but his or her behaviour can help you. It can also be helpful to measure the pain, or ask them to measure it; this can be done using a pain scale, like the ones described on the next page.

## How long should I give painkillers for?

Children are not all the same about how much pain they feel. 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 regularly, 'by the clock'. You may need to do this for several days. After that, you should give painkillers when your child complains of pain.

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

It is alright to give **combinations of painkillers** at the same time, for instance paracetamol and ibuprofen can be given together. But it is very important not to give your child **different brands of the same medicine at the same time**. For example,

paracetamol may be called by several different names: Calpol® and Disprol® are both brands of paracetamol made by different manufacturers.

Always read the label on the medicine bottle and make sure you give the correct dose. If you are not sure about a medicine or have any questions, please contact your local pharmacist or the hospital.

## What are the possible risks and side effects?

Side effects from painkillers are not common. They are described on the piece of paper inside the medicine box from the manufacturer. It is important that you follow the instructions on the bottle and that you do not give the medicine more often than the instructions tell you to. Always tell your doctor if your child is allergic to any medicines.

You should not worry about giving your child medicines to make his or her pain less – they will not become addicted to the medicines, the medicines will not slow down healing or allow them to pull out their stitches by mistake. He or she will feel much better if they are not in pain.

# Assessing your child's pain

## 1. Faces Pain Scale

This is useful for children older than about 4 years.

Ask your child to choose the face that best describes their pain.

The **Total Score** is given below each face.



0

No hurt



2

Hurts  
little bit



4

Hurts  
little more



6

Hurts  
even more



8

Hurts  
whole lot



10

Hurts  
worst

*(adapted from Wong & Baker, 1988)*

2. Pain behaviour scale:

The Parents Postoperative Pain Measure (PPPM)

This scale is useful for younger children.

Give 0 or 1 point for each item in the list below  
and then add them together to give the Total Score.

My child's behaviour	Yes score 1 point each	No score 0 points each
Complains more than usual?		
Cries more easily than usual?		
Plays less than usual?		
Does not do the things he/she usually does?		
Acts more worried than usual?		
Quieter than usual?		
Has less energy than usual?		
Refuses to eat?		
Eats less 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?		
Total Score		

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

If the Total Score is 6 or more on either the Faces or PPPM scale, this means that you should think about giving your child some painkillers.

## Types of pain medicines for children

There are two main types of pain medicine suitable for children: **paracetamol and ibuprofen**. Please remember that **aspirin should not be given** to children under 16 years old, unless prescribed by a doctor.

medicine name	what is it?	side-effects
<b>Paracetamol</b> <b>Also known as</b> <b><u>Brand names</u></b> Calpol Six Plus Disprol® Infadrops® Tixymol® Tixyplus® Medinol®	<p>Paracetamol is a mild painkiller and is available under various brand names.</p> <p>It is one of the most widely used medicines in children and adults; the effects of paracetamol are short lasting and it can be given every four to six hours.</p> <p>Paracetamol works well in combination with ibuprofen. It can also be used to bring down a child's temperature.</p>	<p>Very rarely, a child may develop a rash and other reactions. If this happens, stop giving the medicine and tell your GP.</p> <p>Paracetamol can be harmful if too much is taken (overdose), so do not give more than the prescribed amount, either as a single dose, or during any 24 hour period. There are other types of medicines containing paracetamol, such as cold relief medicines, so it is important to count these in any doses given in a 24 hour period.</p>
<b>Ibuprofen</b> <b>Also known as</b> <b><u>Brand names</u></b> Nurofen® Junifen® Brufen® Cuprofen® Advil®	<p>Ibuprofen is a painkiller that is particularly useful after operations as it reduces inflammation as well as reducing pain; it's a type of medicine called a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID).</p> <p>It is available under various brand names.</p> <p>The effects of ibuprofen may last a bit longer than paracetamol, and it can be given every six to eight hours.</p> <p>Ibuprofen works well in combination with paracetamol. It can also be used to bring down a child's temperature.</p>	<p>The most common side effects of ibuprofen are slight diarrhoea or slight tummy ache.</p> <p>Some children 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 an allergic or other reaction to ibuprofen, stop giving the medicine and tell your GP.</p> <p>Problems due to overdose of ibuprofen are rare, but if you give your child more than the recommended amount, either in a single dose or in any 24 hour period, you should contact your GP as soon as possible.</p>

Further details about paracetamol, ibuprofen and any other medicines, are written on the package insert or you can ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

## Important general information about medicines

- Always shake the bottle well before use.
- Keep medicines in a safe place where children cannot reach them.
- Keep any medicines at room temperature (unless told otherwise), away from bright light or direct sunlight and away from heat.
- If you stop using the medicine or it passes its expiry date, please return it to your pharmacist. Do not flush it down the toilet or throw it away.
- You can get more medicine from your GP or your local pharmacy. However, as there are many different brands available, always check the strength of the brand you have bought and the correct dose for your child with your pharmacist.

### Notes

Pain medicines for .....

To be filled in by your child’s doctor, nurse or pharmacist before you go home.

Medicine name	Dose	How often it can be given	Time of last dose in hospital	Comments
	Follow instructions on bottle / package			
	Follow instructions on bottle / package			

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