Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Medicines Following Orthopaedic Surgery at Wrightington Hospital

Version number: **2**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

Medicines Following Orthopaedic Surgery at Wrightington Hospital

Patient Information

Specialist Services Pharmacy Department

- Author ID: DT
- Leaflet Ref: Pharm 003
- Version: 2
- Leaflet title: Medicines Following Surgery
- Date Produced: June 2026
- Expiry Date: June 2028

Introduction

The purpose of this leaflet is to help you understand some of the medications you may receive following surgery. This information is general, and your treatment plans may differ.

Always consult the manufacturer's information leaflet for more detailed information.

Pain relief should generally be taken regularly for a few days after surgery to keep pain under control. After this period the pain relief should be gradually stepped down and stopped, starting with the strongest pain relief first until you are managing on paracetamol alone. This can then be reduced and stopped as the pain resolves.

The pharmacy will cross out the medications on each leaflet that do not apply to individual patients.

Pain Relief

Paracetamol

What is it for?	To help control mild pain. Helps control more severe pain when combined with stronger pain relief

How do I take it?	Take ONE or TWO tablets FOUR times daily (every 6 hours). If taken regularly helps prevent pain coming on. Do not take more than 8 tablets in 24 hours.
Common side effects?	Well tolerated. Side effects are rare. Some patients develop a rash.
Other information.	Paracetamol may also be in other pain and cold medicines (e.g. co-codamol, hot lemon powder drinks). Never take more than 1 paracetamol-containing product. Taking too much Paracetamol can cause liver damage.

Codeine (weaker opioid pain relief)

What is it for?	To help control moderate pain after surgery.
How do I take it?	Check the pharmacy label. Take this up to FOUR times daily (every 6 hours) if needed for pain that's not controlled by paracetamol, or if you are going to do something that brings on pain. This can be used alongside paracetamol.
Common side effects?	Constipation, Drowsiness/Dizziness, Feeling Sick, Confusion, Itching, Dry Mouth.

Other information.	This is a short-term medication and should usually not be taken for longer than a few weeks, depending on the surgery you've had. It can become addictive if taken for too long. Do not drink alcohol when taking this medicine. Return unused Codeine to the pharmacy for destruction.

Co-Codamol - contains Paracetamol and Codeine (weaker opioid pain relief)

What is it for?	To help control moderate pain after surgery.
How do I take it?	Check the pharmacy label. Take this up to FOUR times daily (every 6 hours) if needed to control pain, or if you are going to do something that brings on pain.
Common side effects?	Constipation, Drowsiness/Dizziness, Feeling Sick, Confusion, Itching, Dry Mouth, Rash
Other information.	This is a short-term medication and should usually not be taken for longer than a few weeks, depending on the surgery you've had. It can become addictive if taken for too long. Do not drink alcohol when taking this medicine. This preparation contains TWO medications – Paracetamol and Codeine. These medications may also be in other pain and cold medicines. Never take other medications that also contain Paracetamol or Codeine while taking Co-Codamol. Return unused Co-Codamol to the pharmacy for destruction.

Tramadol (opioid-type pain relief – used *instead* of codeine in certain patients)

What is it for?	To help control moderate pain after surgery.
How do I take it?	Check the pharmacy label. Take this up to FOUR times daily (every 6 hours) if needed for pain not controlled by paracetamol, or if you are going to do something that brings on pain. This can be used alongside paracetamol.
Common side effects?	Constipation, Drowsiness/Dizziness, Feeling Sick, Confusion, Hallucinations, Dry Mouth.
Other information.	This is a short term medication and should usually not be taken for longer than a few weeks depending on the surgery you've had. If taken for longer, the medication may need to be slowly reduced down rather than stopped abruptly. Do not drink alcohol when taking this medicine. Return unused Tramadol to the pharmacy for destruction.

Morphine (stronger opioid pain relief)

What is it for?	To help control severe pain after surgery.
How do I take it?	If paracetamol and codeine (or paracetamol and tramadol) are not controlling the pain, morphine can also be taken carefully following the instructions on the pharmacy label on the bottle. Do not take higher doses or more doses than prescribed on the label. *DO NOT TAKE MORPHINE WITHIN 2 HOURS OF CODEINE OR TRAMADOL*

Common side effects?	Constipation, Drowsiness/Dizziness, Feeling Sick, Confusion, Itching, Dry Mouth.
Other information.	This is a short-term medication and should usually not be taken for longer than one week, depending on the surgery you've had. It can become addictive if taken for too long. Do not drink alcohol when taking this medicine. Return any unused Morphine to the pharmacy for destruction.

Oxycodone (stronger opioid pain relief - used *instead* of morphine in certain patients)

What is it for?	To help control severe pain after surgery.
How do I take it?	If paracetamol and codeine (if prescribed) are not controlling the pain, oxycodone can also be taken carefully following the instructions on the pharmacy label on the bottle. Do not take higher doses or more doses than prescribed on the label. *DO NOT TAKE OXYCODONE WITHIN 2 HOURS OF CODEINE (if prescribed Codeine)*
Common side effects?	Constipation, Drowsiness/Dizziness, Feeling Sick, Confusion, Itching, Dry Mouth.

Other information.	This is a short-term medication and should usually not be taken for longer than one week, depending on the surgery you've had. It can become addictive if taken for too long. Do not drink alcohol when taking this medicine. Return any unused Oxycodone to the pharmacy for destruction.

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs – NSAIDs - (e.g. Naproxen, Ibuprofen)

What is it for?	To help control pain by reducing inflammation.
How do I take it?	The dose will be individually tailored for you. Follow the pharmacy label. Take with, or just after food.
Common side effects?	Nausea, Rashes, Indigestion/Heartburn, Stomach Pain (may be due to bleeding or ulceration)
Other information.	Anti-inflammatories are not suitable for everyone. To minimise risk of side effects they should be used for a short duration where possible. Consult medical advice if you develop stomach pain, black stools or 'coffee ground' vomit.

Laxatives

Macrogols (Movicol or Laxido)

What is it for?	Helps treat constipation through softening stools by drawing water into the bowel.
How do I take it?	Usually 1 sachet is mixed with water and taken up to TWICE daily. This medicine can take a few days to work, so can be taken to help prevent opioid-induced constipation, as well as to treat it.
Common side effects?	Diarrhoea
Other information.	The dose may need altering up or down to maintain normal stool consistency. e.g. if diarrhoea occurs, stop, or reduce how many sachets are being taken. Keeping drinking fluids and moving about after surgery also helps prevent constipation.

Senna

What is it for?	Helps treat constipation by stimulating the bowel to contract
How do I take it?	Usually, 1 to 2 tablets at night, when needed. Continue using Movicol when adding this in. This medication takes 8-12 hours to work.
Common side effects?	Diarrhoea, Stomach Cramping

Other information.	The dose may need altering up or down to maintain normal stool consistency. e.g. if diarrhoea occurs, stop the tablets. This medication is for short term use. Keeping drinking fluids and moving after surgery also helps prevent constipation.

Other

Acid-reducing drugs (e.g. omeprazole)

What is it for?	To reduce risk of stomach side-effects when taking anti-inflammatories
How do I take it?	Take ONE capsule each day (unless prescribed differently)
Common side effects?	Dizziness, Abdominal Pain, Constipation or Diarrhoea
Other information.	Unless this is a medication you usually take long term for other reasons, this can be stopped once you stop taking the anti-inflammatories.

Discharge information

You will be discharged with a selection of the above medications appropriate to your individual needs. These medications are intended for short term use; however, if you need

further supplies, please contact your GP.

If you have any further medication questions, please contact the Wrightington Pharmacy Department, telephone: **01257 25 6205** or Medicines Information at Royal Albert Edward Infirmary, telephone: **01942 82 2466**

The Orthopaedic Practitioners can be contacted on **01257 25 6372** for advice on managing pain. Note they do not provide prescriptions for medication.

We generally supply adequate pain relief at discharge for specific surgeries. Should you continue to experience moderate to severe pain after you have used up all the pain medication supplied at discharge, contact your surgeon's secretary through the hospital switchboard on **01942 244000.**

If you accidentally take more medication than is recommended, immediately seek medical advice. Contact your GP or NHS 111 for advice on what to do.



Version number: **2**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

All rights reserved © 2026
WWL Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust