Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Managing your pain after birth

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Managing Your Pain After Birth

Patient Information

Maternity Department

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Introduction

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about taking painkillers to treat your pain after birth. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor or midwife.

Who should be taking painkillers?

Most women will need some form of pain relief after having a baby particularly if they have had a Caesarean section or instrumental birth for example, ventouse or forceps delivery.

We recommend taking simple pain-relieving tablets like **paracetamol** and **ibuprofen** after giving birth. These can be bought over the counter at most supermarkets or your local pharmacy.

The policy at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust is that these tablets are not supplied for you to take home and we suggest that you obtain a supply before your baby is born.

What painkillers should I take?

Paracetamol alone is sufficient for some women. This can be taken at a dose of

2 x 500mg tablets every four to six hours, up to four times a day. This is a maximum of 8 tablets in 24 hours. Other medicines can sometimes contain paracetamol, for example, Beechams cold remedies or Solpadeine. You should NOT take these alongside paracetamol tablets. Exceeding the recommended daily dose can lead to liver damage.

Ibuprofen. If additional pain relief is needed, then Ibuprofen can be added. This is sometimes known as Brufen or Nurofen.

Ibuprofen can be taken at a dose of 2 x 200mg tablets up to three times a day. These should be taken with food.

Side effects of ibuprofen include an upset stomach and the possibility of wheeziness. Do not take ibuprofen if you are allergic to aspirin or another NSAID (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug). If you have asthma, make sure you have your relieving (blue) inhaler to hand if this is the first time you have tried taking ibuprofen.

Paracetamol and ibuprofen can be taken at the same time. Taking pain relief regularly means your pain should be well controlled and allow you to move about and recover more quickly.

These medications have been widely used for many years and are considered safe to use in

breastfeeding mothers.

For women who need additional pain relief or, who are unable to tolerate ibuprofen, a small supply of Dihydrocodeine may be given at discharge from hospital.

Dihydrocodeine belongs to a class of medication called opiates and these are strong painkillers. It will be prescribed for you at a dose of 30mg every four to six hours when required. No more than four tablets should be taken in a 24-hour period.

You may wish to stagger these so that you take them between the doses of the other medicines.

Dihydrocodeine can make people feel a little sick, sleepy or can impair concentration and therefore, driving is not advised. It can also cause constipation. It is important to drink enough water and to eat high fibre food to reduce the chance of this happening.

Further information

- Do not exceed the recommended doses for your medication(s)
- Keep a record of the medicines you are taking to help remember how much you have taken each day.
- Always read the manufacturers leaflet contained within the packets. Here you will find a full list of side effects and other information which you may find helpful.
- If you have been taking medications regularly and are still in pain, please speak to your midwife. There are other medicines that can be used if these do not work.

Is there anything else I need to know?

Storage – Always keep your medications out of sight and reach of children and pets. It is recommended that medicines are stored in a cool, dry place out of sunlight.

Disposal – Dispose of any unused medications safely by returning them to your community pharmacy.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please contact the Maternity ward on **01942 778506** (Monday to Sunday, 24 hours) or the Medicines information line on **01942 822466** (Monday to Friday 9am until 5pm).



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