

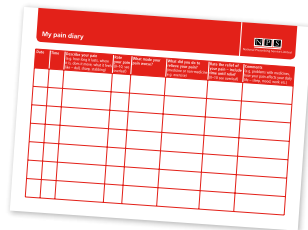
Using opioid medicines for your chronic pain

What is chronic pain?

Chronic pain is when pain occurs most days of the week, for at least three months. It is not always possible to completely relieve chronic pain, however it should be possible to reduce your pain to an acceptable level, improve your quality of life and increase your activity levels.

How do I assess my pain?

Many things can increase or decrease your pain levels. A pain diary can help you keep track of your pain and remember how things like medicines, your mood, stress and sleep patterns affect your pain levels. This information will help you and your healthcare team manage your pain better. See *My pain diary* at www.nps.org.au/opioids



What are opioid medicines?

Opioid medicines provide pain relief by imitating the body's natural pain reliever. They come in many forms including tablets, capsules, patches and liquids. Examples include: codeine (found in Panadeine and Nurofen Plus), fentanyl (Durogesic), morphine (MS Contin) and oxycodone (Oxycontin).

Opioid medicines are used to manage moderate to severe pain when other pain medicines are not suitable or do not provide enough pain relief.

Opioid medicines do not work for everyone or for all types of pain. To start with, your doctor may prescribe an opioid for 2–6 weeks to see if an opioid is suitable for you.

Are there side effects from opioid medicines?

Like all medicines, opioids have side effects. The side effects you experience may vary and will depend on the type of opioid and the dose you take.

Some side effects get better after a short time, but others last longer or can appear after long-term use. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about how to manage side effects of opioid medicines.

Common side effects of opioid medicines

- confusion
- constipation
- dizziness
- drowsiness
- itching
- nausea
- sweating
- vomiting

What is a pain management plan?

A pain management plan is a written 'plan' developed by you and your healthcare team. It details your treatment goals to help manage your pain. Opioid medicines should be used as part of your pain management plan.



Talk to your healthcare team about developing a pain management plan for you. See *My pain management plan* at www.nps.org.au/opioids

Set achievable goals like...

- walking four times a week for half an hour
- hanging out the washing
- returning to work within the next two months.

Using opioid medicines for your chronic pain continued...

What else can I do to help manage my pain?

- Lead a healthy lifestyle (exercise regularly, get adequate sleep, eat a balanced diet).
- Arrange a support network that you can access when you need help (this may include family, friends or fellow pain sufferers).
- Learn skills to help cope with your pain (set priorities or use relaxation therapies).
- Take your medicines only as prescribed. Never try anyone else's medicine or give yours to them: it can be dangerous.
- Reward yourself for each positive step in the management of your pain.

Things to discuss with your doctor or pharmacist

- The details in the consumer medicines information (CMI) leaflet for your opioid medicine.
- An up-to-date list of any medicines that you are taking, including over-the-counter and herbal medicines.
- Any new medicines that you are going to take, to avoid interactions or overdose.
- If your opioid medicine is not working for you.
- Any problems that you experience with your opioid medicine (eg. side effects).

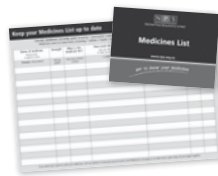
For more information

Visit our website (www.nps.org.au/consumers) for the following:

- Fact sheet, Chronic pain – what can I do?



- Medicines list, a sheet for you to record your medicines



- Medimate, to help you find, understand and use information about medicines (in 5 languages)



- Consumer medicines information (CMI), important facts about your medicines.

Record below any questions to ask your doctor or pharmacist at your next visit:

This leaflet has been provided to you by your doctor or pharmacist to help discuss the use of your medicines, and has been designed to be used with the consumer medicine information leaflet for your medicine.



Think differently about medicines

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