

Pain management for children when discharged from hospital

You may be taking your child home after having a painful operation or they may still require some pain relief at home after their stay in hospital. This leaflet is designed to answer the most common questions parents have regarding pain relief for your child at home.

Common questions answered

How do I know when my child is in pain?

You can assess your child's pain by answering the following questions.

If you answered yes to 6 or more of the questions then your child requires some pain relief.

| | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|
| Whine or complain more than usual? | | |
| Cry more easily than usual? | | |
| Play less than usual? | | |
| Not do the things he or she normally does? | | |
| Act more worried than usual? | | |
| Act more quiet than usual? | | |
| Have less energy than usual? | | |
| Refuse to eat? | | |
| Eat less than normal? | | |
| Hold the sore part of his or her body? | | |
| Try not to bump the sore part of his or her body? | | |
| Groan or moan more than usual? | | |
| Look more flushed than normal? | | |
| Want to be close to you more than normal? | | |
| Take medication when he or she normally refuses? | | |
| Total (add together the number of questions you answered with yes) | | |

(Finley et al. (2003) Clin. J. Pain Sep-Oct 2003;19(5):329-34)

What pain relief is appropriate to give my child?

Paracetamol and Ibuprofen are the most common medicines for pain relief given to children.

What are they and how they work?

Paracetamol and Ibuprofen can be given together, but should not be given with any other medicines which contain the same drug. Always check the packet to see what the medicine contains. They both work well together to help relieve pain and can also bring down a temperature. Ibuprofen is particularly helpful after an operative because it reduces inflammation.

How often should I give pain relief?

It is important for the first day or two after your child's operation that they are given pain relief regularly (day and night).

- Paracetamol can be given every 4 to 6 hours (maximum of 4 doses in 24 hours).
- Ibuprofen can be given every 6 to 8 hours (maximum of 3 doses in 24 hours).

A few days after their operation they should be given pain relief only when they complain of pain. If you have been told by your doctor to give the pain relief regularly for a longer period of time please follow their advice as there are some operations that require this (such as tonsillectomy).

How much pain relief should I give?

The instructions for how much medicine to give is written on the packet. Please refer to these instructions for your child's age. If you have given pain relief to your child and you are still concerned about the level pain your child is experiencing, please contact the ward that you were discharged from.

Are there any side effects?

There are minimal side effects to these drugs when they are given properly. If your child experiences side effects please discuss this with your local pharmacist or GP.

If you have been told by your doctor not to give one of these medicines for a specific reason please follow their advice.

What else can I do other than give pain relief to help my child's pain?

Distraction is very commonly used to help children cope with pain. It can be helpful to involve your child in things they enjoy doing such as playing with certain toys, playing with bubbles, watching a film or playing games on a tablet. Others may enjoy reading and being cuddled.

It is useful to set a timer to remind you to give the pain relief regularly for the first couple of days.

| Paracetamol | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Date/Time last given In hospital: | Every 4 to 6 hours Max 4 doses per day | Every 4 to 6 hours Max 4 doses per day | Every 4 to 6 hours Max 4 doses per day |
| First dose | Write time given | Write time given | Write time given |
| Second dose | Write time given | Write time given | Write time given |
| Third dose | Write time given | Write time given | Write time given |
| Fourth dose | Write time given | Write time given | Write time given |

| Ibuprofen | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Date/Time last given in hospital: | Every 6 to 8 hours Max 3 doses per day | Every 6 to 8 hours Max 3 doses per day | Every 6 to 8 hours Max 3 doses per day |
| First dose | Write time given | Write time given | Write time given |
| Second dose | Write time given | Write time given | Write time given |
| Third dose | Write time given | Write time given | Write time given |

Please ensure you understand what you need to do. Ask your nurse any questions you may have before you are discharged.

Ward/Unit Name: Contact Number:

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS:

Tel: 020 3299 3601 Email: kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net

You can also contact us by using our online form at www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals

PALS at Princess Royal University Hospital, Farnborough Common, Orpington, Kent BR6 8ND

Tel: 01689 863252 Email: kch-tr.palspruh@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.