

SAFE PAIN MANAGEMENT WITH OVER-THE-COUNTER CODEINE COMBINATION PAINKILLERS

- Codeine-combination painkillers should only be used for the short term treatment of moderate pain when simple painkillers have not worked.
- You should only take codeine-combination painkillers for a maximum of 3 days at a time. If you need to take it for longer than 3 days you should see your doctor or pharmacist for advice. There may be a better way to manage your pain.
- Codeine-combination painkillers contain codeine which can cause addiction if you take them for longer than 3 days.
- Codeine-combination painkillers can cause other serious side effects, especially if you take them for a longer period of time or more than the recommended daily dose.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS

CODEINE.

You may become constipated when taking codeine. Prolonged constipation can seriously damage the lower bowel.

You may become drowsy or dizzy when taking codeine. If affected do not drive or operate machinery

Codeine can cause addiction if you take it for more than 3 days at a time or in higher doses than recommended. If you do, you may get withdrawal symptoms when you stop taking it. (See next page).

IBUPROFEN or ASPIRIN.

High daily doses and long term use can cause serious side effects.

If you suffer from any of the following, or these happen during treatment, stop taking the medicine and seek immediate medical help.

- Severe stomach pain or indigestion.
- Peptic ulcer (i.e. stomach or duodenal ulcer), or have had one before.
- Bleeding from the rectum (back passage), have black sticky bowel motions (stool) or bloody diarrhoea
- Vomiting blood or material that looks like coffee grounds.
- Extreme paleness, weakness or exhaustion. These can be symptoms of anaemia, kidney failure, loss of protein from the bowel, low blood potassium or other blood disorders

Ibuprofen may worsen existing bowel disease such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis

High doses of ibuprofen can more than double your risk of heart attack or heart failure

PARACETAMOL

In high doses paracetamol can damage the liver and cause liver failure, and also cause kidney failure. If an overdose is taken or suspected, ring the Poisons Information Centre (phone 131 126) or go to the hospital straight away, even if you feel well, because of the risk of delayed, serious liver damage if left untreated

If you suffer from the following side effects seek immediate medical help.

- Liver problems such as hepatitis or jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes), abdominal pain, nausea, extreme paleness.

CODEINE: HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM ADDICTED?

If addiction occurs it is a very serious problem.

If you answer “yes” to any of the questions below then you should talk to your doctor.

- Do you need to take the codeine combination painkillers for longer than instructed on the pack?
- Do you tend to take more and more of these medications?
- Do you feel the need to take more than the recommended dose?
- Do you feel very unwell when you stop taking the medicine but feel better if you start taking it again?

Symptoms of **codeine withdrawal** include: restlessness, anxiety, yawning, runny nose, watery eyes, sweating, stomach and leg cramps and spasms, difficulty sleeping, diarrhoea, goose bumps, irritability, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting,.

IF I AM CONCERNED, HOW DO I FIND HELP?

You should seek advice from your pharmacist or doctor.

You can also call a telephone drug and alcohol counselling service. Many operate 24 hours seven days a week.

Victoria.

DirectLine: 1800 888 236

South Australia.

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)
1300 131 340

New South Wales

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)
Sydney: 02 9361 8000
Regional NSW: 1800 422 599

Australian Capital Territory.

ACT Health Services: Alcohol & Other Drugs
02 6207 9977

Queensland,

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)
1800 177 833

Tasmania.

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)
1800 811 994

Western Australia.

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)
Perth: 08 9442 5000
Regional WA: 1800 198 024

Northern Territory.

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)
1800 131 350

Manage Pain Safely: when taking pain medicines that contain codeine, take them for a maximum of three days only. If pain persists speak to your pharmacist.

Endorsement: Harm Minimisation Committee of the
Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (Victorian Branch, 2014)