

Chronic Pain Department – All Chronic Pain Procedures Undertaken

Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital. The guidance has been written by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

Guidance for Patients

Opioid Medicines for Chronic Pain

- Opioids are strong medicines, which work against pain. They can be taken for pain after an operation or accident but are also for people who have chronic pain. Your doctor may ask you to try taking these strong medicines to see if they will help your pain so that you can lead a more normal life.
- This leaflet tells you about what it's like to take these strong opioids. It will help you to decide if you want to try them for your chronic pain.
- Opioids (pronounced 'oh-pee-oyds') are medicines which act like morphine. The word opioid is used because morphine comes from the opium poppy. How helpful are these drugs?
- Some people have pain which lasts for months or years (chronic pain). This pain may not feel any better after taking everyday pain medicine such as paracetamol, co-codamol or ibuprofen. Sometimes the pain is so bad or lasts for so long that it affects people's lives so that they do less on a day-to-day basis and feel unhappy.
- Opioids may lessen your pain so that you can lead a more normal life. Your doctor will talk to you about being more active and doing more and more things bit by bit. Then you can return to a more normal way of life and feel happier. How will I know if these drugs will work for me?
- The only way to find this out is to try them.
- Your doctor will prescribe an opioid and you will start to take a small amount at first. Then he will gradually give you more of the drug to take to see if it starts to work for you.

Strong Opioids for Chronic Pain

- Some people find that opioids do not help their pain. Some people find that side effects stop them from taking these medicines. If the opioids are not helping, then your doctor will stop them. This will be done slowly.
- If the drug he gives you helps your pain, then you may be able to do more things and enjoy life more.
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- Your doctor, or other medical person treating you such as a nurse, will ask you how you are getting on with the drug. They will ask you whether the drug makes you feel ill or causes any other problems (side effects) and whether it helps your pain, and if you are able to do more active things. What are the side effects? Common side effects
- Your doctor will prescribe a laxative for you at the time you start the opioids. Laxatives help with constipation (when bowel movement is not frequent enough). It is common for people taking opioids to become constipated unless they take regular laxatives. It is also important to drink plenty of water and to eat fresh fruit and vegetables, which contain lots of fibre.
- Often people feel sleepy when they start taking opioids. This sleepiness often gets better after a time as your body gets used to the drug.
- When you start to take opioids, you may feel sick, and you may need to take some medicine to avoid sickness. This side effect usually wears off after a few days.
- Some people feel itchy when they take opioids and your doctor may change your medicine to a different opioid, so that you have less itching.
- Some people find that opioids make them feel very sweaty and this problem may not get better.
- Putting on weight or losing weight can happen to people taking opioids for a long time. Uncommon side effects There are some side effects, which do not happen very often.
- You may lose your sex drive or become infertile if you take an opioid drug for a long time. If the opioids are stopped the sex drive returns and the ability to have children returns.
- Very occasionally people who take opioids for a long time may become thin, tired, and dizzy. This is due to an effect on one of the glands in the body (the adrenal gland) and stopping the opioid will return things to normal

Take Your Medication

A better health outcome is the most significant benefit of using medication correctly as prescribed. Doctors prescribe medications to treat your symptoms and to help you manage or overcome certain health conditions. Failing to use medicines as prescribed can result in worsened health, longer recovery, unwanted side effects, substance use disorders, death, and other serious health conditions that require intensive treatment.

Before using a new medication, carefully read all the directions on the label and ask your doctor or pharmacist for help and clarification if you're confused or unsure about how to properly take the medication. This can prevent misunderstandings that could lead to accidentally doubling up on doses or using less than intended.

Your doctor or pharmacist can also explain possible side effects you may face when misusing the medication or combining it with certain other substances. For instance, benzodiazepines should never be mixed with opioids, since this combination can result in overdose or death. Here are some additional tips for taking your medications as prescribed:

- Use your medication at the same time every day to prevent the overlapping of doses.
- Keep an updated list of all the medications on hand, so every doctor and specialist you meet with can screen for potentially fatal drug interactions.

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- Check to see whether your medications should be taken on an empty or full stomach.
- Build medication into your daily routine so you never forget to take it, such as before brushing your teeth at night or after eating breakfast.
- Use daily pill containers to help you keep track of whether you've taken your daily doses.
- Refill your daily pill container on the same day every week to avoid doubling up on doses.

Finding a Pharmacy

You can find a pharmacy near you by searching on [NHS Choices](#) or alternatively see the [local listings](#).

- **Pharmacy Opening Times**

Find out the opening times of a [pharmacy near you](#).

- **Stop Smoking Service**

- The stop smoking service provides a range of options to help you quit including support from an advisor, stop smoking medications, e-cigarettes, and a digital offer for those who wish to quit by themselves.

- ***Did you know that you're up to 4 times more likely to quit smoking successfully with expert support?***

- If you are not ready to quit just yet, but would like more information on how to protect your family, [Lifestyles • Livewire \(livewirewarrington.co.uk\)](#), advises on how to make your home and car smoke free.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If you Notice your health Deteriorating, please contact Your Local GP, NHS 111 and or An Emergency Department if the Condition is Life Threatening.

Contact Us

If You Require any Leaflets to manage your pain in the Interim, the following Leaflets are available:

Leaflets available from the Pain Relief Foundation website: www.painrelieffoundation.org.uk/pain Back Pain, Fibromyalgia, Headache Trigeminal Neuralgia Sciatica Opioid Medicine for Chronic Pain Arthritis Phantom Limb Pain Complex Regional Pain Syndrome Shingles & PHN Cancer Pain Central Post Stroke Pain Over-the-counter medic.

If You Require any further Support, please do contact:

Chronic Pain Department

Warrington and Halton Hospitals teaching Hospitals

Secretaries on 01928 753163 or 01928 753517.