

Managing your Child's Pain at Home

This leaflet aims to give information on pain relief for your child after their operation. It outlines what to expect and how you can ensure they remain comfortable while they recover at home.



My child has had an operation, what should I expect when we get home?

During surgery and while in hospital your child would have been given painkillers but these will wear off when you get home. It is very important that your child takes regular painkillers following surgery to prevent pain.



You know your child best, so you will be able to tell if they are uncomfortable. However, besides pain at the site of the operation, which can sometimes be quite sore, your child may experience other general aches and pains such as a sore throat or headache. These can happen just after an operation. They should be mild, easily treated with Paracetamol and will normally go away within the first 24 hours.

What can I do to make my child's pain better?

The nurses and/or pharmacists will advise you about what pain medicines to use. Follow their advice and the instructions provided with the medications. Remember that after surgery painkillers should be given regularly, until the pain is gone. Different types of painkillers work well together, for instance, Paracetamol and Ibuprofen can be given at the same time for a stronger effect.

It is also important to remember:

- Do not wait for the pain to get unbearable before you give your child painkillers
- Giving painkillers at bedtime will help your child to sleep through the night
- If your child is still in pain or you are concerned about the severity of pain, you should contact the hospital for advice.

Other things along with pain medication can help manage your child's pain. For example, reading a story, watching television, massage or playing gentle games can take the focus of pain away, using distraction.

How can I tell if my child is in pain?

If your child is old enough, they will be able to tell you that they are in pain. It is more difficult to judge in younger children, but their behaviour may help you recognise any discomfort. For example, crying, irritability, decreased appetite or being quiet and not interested in playing.



How long should I give painkillers for?

No two children will feel pain in the same way. In general, you should give your child painkillers for as long as they are complaining of pain. When the pain is bad, you should give the painkillers regularly, 'by the clock' and not wait for your child to complain of pain. The length of time your child will need painkillers for will depend on the operation they have had. Once the pain is less severe, you should only give your child painkillers when they complain of pain.

Is it safe to give my child more than one painkiller at the same time?

Yes, it is safe to give combinations of painkillers at the same time, for instance Paracetamol and Ibuprofen can be given together. It is important not to give your child different brands of the same medicine. Always read the label carefully, making sure you give the correct dose.

What are the possible side effects?

Side effects from painkillers are not common once the medicines are given at the right dose and at the right time. The leaflet that comes with the medicine will describe any possible side effects.

If you have any concerns about your child when you get home you should contact the Hospital on 020 7935 7700 and ask for the Paediatric Duty Manager.



35 Weymouth Street, London W1G 8BJ
www.harleystreetchildrenshospital.com

info.thsc@hcahealthcare.co.uk

Switchboard (24hrs) +44 (0)20 7935 7700

THE HARLEY STREET CLINIC

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL



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A Guide for Parents and Guardians of Children

