



# Medication Options for Acute Pain

## What is it?

There are two main types of pain: acute and chronic.

Acute pain starts suddenly and is usually short-lived. It can range from mild to severe and can have many different causes. Acute pain does not mean the pain is necessarily severe. It means it is short-lived (lasting for a few moments, days or weeks). This type of pain is warning you that your body is injured in some way.

In response, you protect the damaged area and seek help to address the cause. As your body heals, the acute pain usually reduces or goes away.

## What will my GP do now?

Your treatment will depend on the type of pain you are experiencing. It will also depend on the underlying cause of the pain. Your doctor will tend to any injury or condition related to your acute pain.

## What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will tell you to slowly reduce or stop your medicine once your pain starts improving or resolves.

If your acute pain has not improved, your doctor may suggest changing medication or dosage.

Sometimes, acute pain can transform into [chronic pain](#). If this happens, your doctor may:

- Discuss different pain management options for chronic pain
- Explain how some medicines are suitable for acute pain, but not safe and effective for chronic pain
- Refer you to a specialist clinic, if the treatments for your pain are not working

## What can I do?

Here's what you can do to help manage your acute pain:

- Don't increase the dose of your medicine unless directed by a health professional
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant – some pain relievers can pass to the baby and potentially cause harm
- Don't take any extra over-the-counter medicine without consulting your doctor or pharmacist
- Don't take your medicine longer than recommended by your doctor, as some pain relievers can be harmful if taken too long

## Medications for acute pain

The main pain medicines used for acute pain are:

- paracetamol
- non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) – medicines that relieve pain and reduce redness and swelling (e.g. ibuprofen)
- opioid medications – which are reserved for more severe pain and only used in the short term (e.g. tramadol, morphine, and oxycodone)
- some types of antidepressants
- some types of anti-epileptic medicines

Your GP can give you more information about your options for pain medications

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## What questions could I ask my doctor?

- What are the side effects of my medication?*
- How do I know if I need pain medication?*
- What if I still feel pain?*
- How long should I take medication for?*
- What happens if the medication doesn't help?*
- What should I take if I'm pregnant?*
- What risks should I be aware of?*



## Where can I learn more?

- **Better Health Channel** – pain and pain management: [betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://betterhealth.vic.gov.au)
- **National Prescribing Service** – medicines for pain relief: [nps.org.au](http://nps.org.au)

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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