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## Pain Relief

Pain is the body's signal that something is not right but our response to pain, and our ability to put up with it, is as variable as human nature itself. It depends on how bad the pain is, why the pain is occurring, how long we think we will have to put up with it, what medicines we know are available and what our past experiences are with pain relief treatments.

Pain has many causes including injury, illness, disease, hormonal changes, emotional upset and stress. The first step is finding out and understanding the cause of the pain. If it is a one-off headache or the pain is from a physical injury such as muscle strain then treatment can be straight forward. There are a number of pain relief medications available in the pharmacy but because they work in different ways and because some people can have problems with some products, it is important to talk with us to establish what is best for you. Our role is to ensure you receive the medicine that is most appropriate for your condition, so the pain goes quickly and you do not react to the medicine.

Pain killers available include:

1. **Paracetamol** - usually for mild to moderate pain. It stops pain messages being passed to the brain. The liquid formulations are the most suitable pain reliever for children. Only the exact dose indicated on the label should be given and doses should not be continued beyond 24 hours, unless advised by your pharmacist or doctor.
2. **Codeine** - usually reserved for stronger pain such as dental pain, period pain or migraines. It acts by stopping pain signals in the brain. Codeine products often also contain other pain relief medicines such as paracetamol or aspirin. Use for three days or more at a time can cause constipation in some people.

**Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)** - these medicines reduce pain caused by inflammation or swelling. They are used for sports-related injuries and muscle aches, headache, period pain and dental pain. For injuries due to sprains and strains, use the RICE method - Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation to 'kick-start' the healing process. Aspirin should not be given to children under twelve years of age. People who have asthma or allergic conditions or have had a stomach or duodenal ulcer, should check with their doctors or pharmacists before taking NSAIDs.

There are some important considerations to make when taking medicines for pain. Carefully read the instructions on the packet and take only the recommended dose. Taking more than that can lead to serious problems. If the underlying condition resulting in the pain is of a more serious nature, or long-term pain relief is needed, you should discuss this with your doctor.

Pain relievers often are combined with other medicines for different conditions, for example cough and cold products. It is important to check the ingredient lists when buying medicines to stop you from doubling-up.