

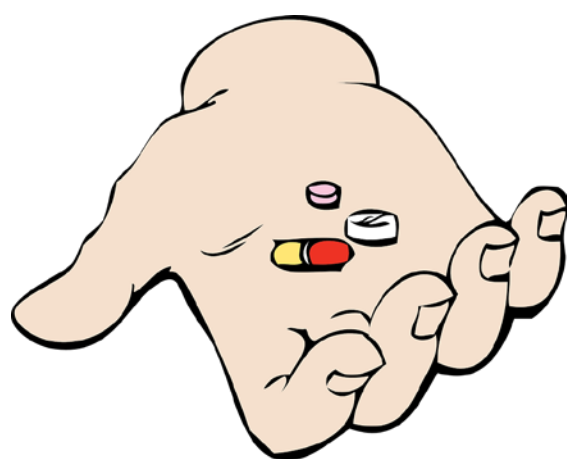
Statewide Persistent Pain Management Network



Persistent Pain Education Series

Managing Your Medicines

- Some medications can help persistent pain and may help you to be able to do more or to get better sleep.
- Usually medication is **only part of the plan** to help you manage your pain.
- Looking at understanding more about how pain becomes persistent, how you feel and building up your ability to be active are really important.
- Following a **pain management plan** may reduce the need to take medication in the long term.
- Medicines work in different ways for different people, so it can be a process of trial and error to see whether something helps you or not.
- It's **useful to keep a diary** of what you're able to do and how you feel when you start a new medication. This will help you to figure out if it helps you to increase your daily functioning.
- If your medication does not help you do more; if it makes you too sleepy or dizzy or if you have any other side effects, it's best to discuss with your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist about whether to carry on taking it or to cut it out. Some medicines need to be reduced gradually.
- Some medicines used to help people manage with persistent pain were originally designed for different conditions, such as depression and epilepsy. Any time the medication label or information does not match your expectations it is important to have this explained by the prescriber.
- **Cutting down or stopping a medicine** out might lead to withdrawal effects, such as feeling anxious or having a flare up of your pain. This is because your nervous system needs a little time to adjust and it will usually settle down in a few days or a couple of weeks at most.



Key messages

Medicines work in **different ways for different people**.

Most medicines have a limited effect in persistent pain.

Antidepressant and anti-epileptic medicines are often used for persistent pain. They help calm down overactive nerves.



Things to remember

- **Take responsibility** to learn about your medicine and any side effects.
- Remember that **medications are only part of** the pain management plan.
- Medication **usually has a limited effect** – maybe reducing pain levels by about a third.
- There is strong evidence that strong painkillers, opiates like morphine and oxycodone are not much help in persistent pain, they might make you feel worse and there are significant **dangers in taking opiates**.

Side effects

All medicines can cause side effects, but this does not mean they will happen to every person.

The **benefits** of pain medication (e.g. more mobility, improved sleep, pain relief) need to be weighed against **possible side effects** (e.g. drowsiness, nausea, weight gain).

If you experience side effects you may need to:

- change your medicine
- change the dosage of your medicine or come off it.
- try to cope with the side effect
- relieve the side effect (e.g. use a laxative for constipation).

It is important you **consult with your GP** before making any changes to the type or amount of medicine you are taking.



Tips on taking your medicine

- Take your medicine as they have been **prescribed** to you by your GP to help you do more.
- Get into the **habit** of taking your medicine at the same time every day – the NPS has an app for that (see below)
- Be aware of the dose and how many times you should take it per day.
- Purchase a **dosing box** which displays the days of the week and times of day.
- Write down a **list of the medicines** you take (including vitamins, supplements and other complementary and alternative medicines), and have this ready for when you see your healthcare professional. (or use the NPS app)
- Always talk to your **GP or local pharmacist** if you have any questions.
- Keep your **medications safely away** from others especially children - this includes used patches.
- Plan for medication use when **travelling**.
- Work with your GP and local pharmacist to make sure the medicine is helping you, and discuss any problems you may be having with it.
- If you hear about new or different medicines, discuss these with your doctor or pharmacist.

Please write any questions you may have in the space below.

My notes

You can record information discussed with the staff of the Persistent Pain Management or members of your Community Support Team:

For more information about medication – please visit the **National Prescribing Service** <https://www.nps.org.au/medical-info/consumer-info> - Telephone: +61 2 8217 8700