

What are opioid painkillers?

They are powerful pain-relieving medications. They are useful when other pain killers are not effective.

This leaflet refers to co-codamol, but the same warnings and advice apply to the other medicines listed above.

What are the side effects you may get with co-codamol?

Short Term	Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nausea	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dependency/Addiction
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Constipation• Drowsiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sexual Problems - Low sex drive, erection problems, period problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dizziness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased risk of fractures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dry mouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headache	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impaired memory
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confusion	

What are problems you may get with long term use?

In addition to the side effects listed above, taking this group of drugs long term may cause you:

- Medication -overuse headache. This is caused when you take painkillers very regularly for headaches. Codeine, both on its own and in co-codamol is probably the worst culprit.
- Reduced effectiveness of medication- which is when your body becomes used to these tablets and so will not provide the same pain relief.
- We know that these can be very addictive medications, so you should try to keep your use of these medicines as low as possible.
- Side effects are particularly common in the elderly people and often cause them to have more falls.

How should you reduce your use of opioid painkillers?

- It is best to reduce your co-codamol slowly, which should make it unlikely that you will experience withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea and sweats.
- If you do get these symptoms, they should only last for a few days.
- An example of how you could reduce your usage of these strong, potentially addictive medicines is shown below.
- If you weigh less than 50kg*, it is important that you do not take any more than:
4 x paracetamol 500mg or 4 x co-codamol or 4 x co-dydramol in any 24 hour period.

Week	Morning*	Lunch*	Teatime*	Night*
Week 1	2 co-codamol	1 co-codamol plus 1 paracetamol	2 co-codamol	2 co-codamol
Week 2	2 co-codamol	1 co-codamol plus 1 paracetamol	1 co-codamol plus 1 paracetamol	2 co-codamol
Week 3	1 co-codamol plus 1 paracetamol	1 co-codamol plus 1 paracetamol	1 co-codamol plus 1 paracetamol	2 co-codamol
Week 4	1 co-codamol plus 1 paracetamol	1 co-codamol plus 1 paracetamol	1 co-codamol plus 1 paracetamol	1 co-codamol plus 1 paracetamol
Week 5	1 co-codamol plus 1 paracetamol	2 paracetamol	1 co-codamol plus 1 paracetamol	1 co-codamol plus 1 paracetamol

If you would like further information or help with stopping your medication please make an appointment to discuss with your doctor.