

Step 1. Get informed before you start

- If you have an allergy, ask your doctor or pharmacist to check all the ingredients.
- Read the 'Consumer Medicines Information' sheet – from your doctor, pharmacist or inside the packaging
- Ask your doctor questions. Here are some you might find helpful:

Will the new medicine mix?	...with any current medicines? If you use alcohol or other drugs, ask about consequences – your doctor wants you to stay safe too.
What benefit should I expect?	A medicine is beneficial if it helps with pain enough, enables activity, and doesn't interfere with mood or things you want to do. Let your doctor know what 'enough' relief means for you before you start.
How long will it take to work?	Some medicines take weeks until their best effect. Don't give up too soon.
Risks – generally and for me?	Do you need to think about the effects on exams, driving, pregnancy? Is the medication habit forming ('addictive')?
Best timing?	Should this medicine be taken with food? If just once a day, is it best in the morning (causes alertness) or evening (causes drowsiness)?
How should I stop it?	Suddenly or gradually? Why and when? Medications are not 'for life'.

Step 2. Get into a routine

- Some medicines need to be taken regularly to have the best effect – set reminders or ask someone to help you until taking your medicine is automatic.
- If you take multiple medicines per day, consider talking with your pharmacist about multidose ('Webster') pack to help you keep track of what to take when – they aren't just for old people.
- Make other ways of managing pain (in addition to medicine) part of your daily routine too
- Make medication plans if you are going for sleepovers or travelling so you can keep to your routine
- Regularly see one general practitioner (or practice) for medicine prescription and check-ins
- Have a regular pharmacy so you can have prescriptions sent there directly

Step 3. Monitor your progress

- Assess the effect of the medication over a trial period – usually 1 week for paracetamol or NSAIDs; 4 weeks for other pain medicines. Keep a diary of pain, sleep, activity and mood to help with this.
- If you notice any new problems, consider whether these could be due to the medicine and if unsure discuss them with a doctor, pharmacist or health helpline
- Monitoring should include pain management approaches outlined in our other training modules.
- Typically, the management modules that most young people use for good pain care include Approaching Pain, Making Sense of Pain and Movement with Pain.

Step 4. Know 'who you gonna call?'

- Ask the prescriber who to call about problems or if uncertain whether to continue – don't just 'google it'
- For medicines with potential effects on mood, consider who you will talk to if your mood changes – your doctor can help you make a mental health safety plan and offer helpline numbers.
- Is there a backup prescriber in the practice if your regular doctor is away?

Step 5. Stay safe

- Never take other people's medicines
- Never give your medicines to other people
- If you start a new medicine for any other reason, cross check that it will not interfere with your pain medicine(s)
- Always take medicine as prescribed or discuss changes with your doctor / pharmacist. Medicines taken in overdose or in unauthorised combinations have caused death
- Store medicines safely to protect those around you. In particular store medicines where they cannot be accessed by children, confused or depressed people. Don't leave a bag with medicine unattended. All medicines taken into schools should be stored safely by staff.

Step 6. How to stop

- Ask your doctor about whether and how you should stop your pain medicine safely