

Table 1 - Example table for combining standard paracetamol with combination (co-codamol or co-dydramol) pain relief medication

Aim to step down the dose when your pain is controlled and then step up when your pain is less well controlled.

The table below gives examples of how you can do this for paracetamol and co-codamol

Approx timings	7-8am	12-1pm	5-6pm	10-11pm
Pain controlled by paracetamol alone	2 paracetamol 500mg	2 paracetamol 500mg	2 paracetamol 500mg	2 paracetamol 500mg
Pain slightly worse, add opioids Pain slightly better remove opioids	2 co-codamol	2 paracetamol	2 paracetamol	2 co-codamol
	or			
	1 paracetamol + 1 co-codamol	1 paracetamol + 1 co-codamol	1 paracetamol + 1 co-codamol	1 paracetamol + 1 co-codamol
	or			
	1 paracetamol + 1 co-codamol	2 paracetamol	2 paracetamol	2 co-codamol
	or			
Any combination of the above as long as you don't exceed the equivalent of 8x paracetamol (4000mg in 24hrs)				
Max dose for flare up of pain	2 co-codamol	2 co-codamol	2 co-codamol	2 co-codamol

REMINDER

The important thing to remember is that each co-codamol or co-dydramol tablet has the same amount of paracetamol (500mg) as one ordinary paracetamol tablet or caplet.

You can take both kinds of tablets but remember;

- Do not take more than two paracetamol or paracetamol containing tablets at a time
- Leave 4-6 hours between doses
- Do not take more than a total of 8 paracetamol or paracetamol containing tablets (4000mg or 4g) per day

Table 2 - Different strengths of co-codamol and co-dydramol

Co-codamol and co-dydramol are available in different strengths. Some of these need a prescription

	Paracetamol per tablet	Codeine per tablet	Other information
Paracetamol 500mg	500mg	none	Buy in shops or pharmacies.
Co-codamol 8/500	500mg	8mg	Buy in pharmacies, for short term use.
Co-codamol 15/500	500mg	15mg	Prescription required. Also called Codipar®
Co-codamol 30/500	500mg	30mg	Prescription required. Also called Solpadol®, Tylex®, Kapake®
	Paracetamol per tablet	Dihydrocodeine per tablet	Other information
Paracetamol 500mg	500mg	none	Buy in shops or pharmacies.
Co-dydramol 7.46/500	500mg	7.46mg	Buy in pharmacies, for short term use. Also called Paramol®
Co-dydramol 10/500	500mg	10mg	Prescription required.
Co-dydramol 20/500	500mg	20mg	Prescription required. Also called Remedeine®
Co-dydramol 30/500	500mg	30mg	Prescription required. Also called Remedeine Forte®

Table 3 - Example of reducing combination pain relief

This is how you could begin to reduce your co-codamol;

Week	Morning	Lunch time	Teatime	Night
Dose	2 co-codamol	2 co-codamol	2 co-codamol	2 co-codamol
1	2 co-codamol	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol	2 co-codamol	2 co-codamol
2	2 co-codamol	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol	2 co-codamol
3	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol	2 co-codamol
4	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol
5	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol	2 paracetamol	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol
6	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol	2 paracetamol	2 paracetamol	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol
7	2 paracetamol	2 paracetamol	2 paracetamol	1 co-codamol + 1 paracetamol
8	2 paracetamol	2 paracetamol	2 paracetamol	2 paracetamol

If you manage to reduce your co-codamol dose then this can be stepped back up when required for short periods to better control your pain when it becomes worse.

The plan can be used for co-dydramol too.

Paracetamol in combination pain relief (analgesics)

Paracetamol can be used with stronger pain management medication to get additional pain relief. To show the combination of medications the name starts with co-.

Paracetamol combined with codeine as a single tablet is called co-codamol.

Paracetamol combined with dihydrocodeine as a single tablet is called co-dydramol.

The important thing to remember is that each co-codamol or co-dydramol tablet has the same amount of paracetamol (500mg) as one ordinary paracetamol tablet or caplet.

You can take both kinds of tablets but remember;

- Do not take more than two paracetamol or paracetamol containing tablets at a time
- Leave a gap of 4-6 hours between doses
- Do not take more than a total of 8 paracetamol or paracetamol containing tablets (4000mg or 4g) per day

Taking both kinds of tablets can give you better control of your pain. It can also help to reduce or manage side effects. Tolerance and dependency issues will also be less likely.

See table 1 for examples of combining standard paracetamol with combination pain relief medication.

Codeine and dihydrocodeine

Codeine and dihydrocodeine belong to a group of pain relief called 'weak opioid' analgesics. These medications are part of the opium family and originally come from poppy seeds. Although called 'weak opioids' they are strong pain relief medications.

See table 2 for information on the different preparations available.

Are there any side effects?

All medications can cause side effects but not everyone will get them. There is a full list in the patient information sheet with your prescription.

These tablets can cause side effects. The common ones are feelings of sickness, constipation or drowsiness/sleepiness.

Some side effects can be reduced by slowly building up the dose. Others may pass after the first few doses. If side effects go on and become a problem or you have others not expected then speak to your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist.

If the medication makes you feel drowsy you should avoid driving or operating machinery. It is a criminal offence to drive a vehicle whilst unsafe due to medication use. This might be worse when you start the tablets and each time your dose goes up. Alcohol may make the sleepiness worse and should be avoided where possible.

Weak opioids, such as codeine and dihydrocodeine, have the potential to cause tolerance, dependence and addiction, although this is rare when taken as prescribed for chronic pain. One way to help avoid this is to vary your dose depending on your pain levels. Speak to your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist if you have any concerns.

Reducing your dose

If you have been taking the maximum or a fixed dose of co-codamol (or co-dydramol) for a long time you may wish to try reducing this. Do not stop suddenly as this may cause withdrawal symptoms. Reducing the dose slowly will help stop this happening. This should be done when your pain is stable you do not have additional stresses in your life.

See table 3 for an example of reducing combination pain relief.

Medication in chronic pain

The benefit from taking medication should always be more than any side-effects you may have. Only **you**

- know how bad your pain is
- are able to say if your medication is helping
- know what side effects you are having

It may take a few weeks or several trials of different medications to find the best combination for you and your pain. It may help to keep a diary of your pain and other symptoms. Side effects often become less once you have been on a medicine for a few days.

Please read the patient information sheet given with each medication. It will give you more information about the medicine and any side effects.

You can discuss your pain medication with your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist. They can give you advice on which pain medicines may help and they can help you find the best way to take your medicines. They can advise you on putting your dose up safely if your pain is worse and on taking less medication safely when your pain is less.

If your medicine is not helping you may not need to take it. Please talk to your doctor or pharmacist first. Some pain medicines should not be stopped suddenly.

Do not share or take other peoples medication. Always advise your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist about any other medication or products you are taking for chronic pain including things bought from the pharmacy, herbal supplements or non- prescribed medicines.

Understanding how your medications work may help you to get the best pain relief from it with the least side-effects.

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Paracetamol combinations (co-codamol and co-dydramol)

Patient Information Leaflet



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