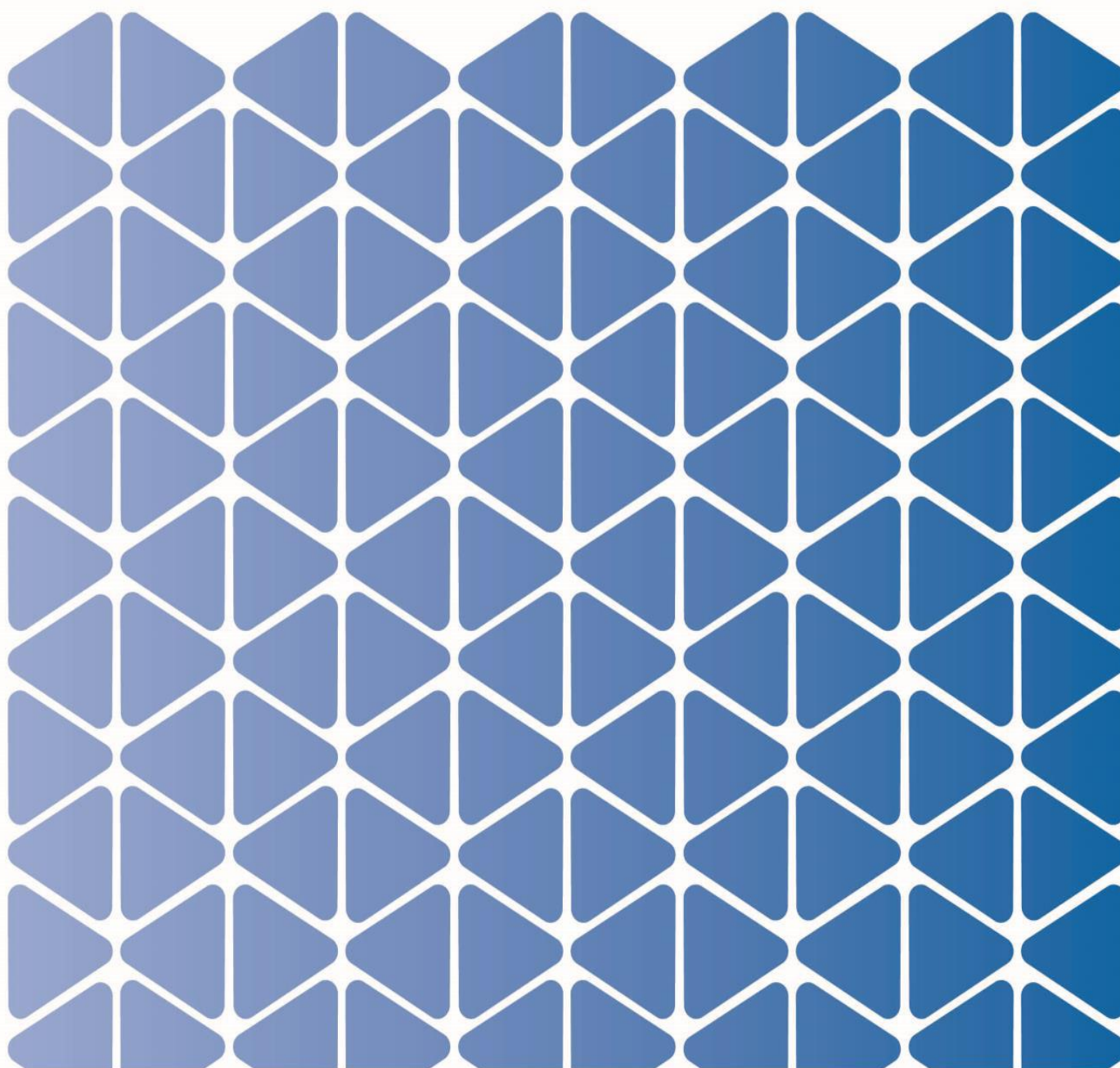


PATIENT INFORMATION

Going Home with Opioid Painkillers



Why you were given them

- While you were in hospital, you were given opioid painkillers (such as morphine, tramadol, oxycodone, codeine, or dihydrocodeine).
- These medicines help control strong pain after surgery, making it easier for you to move, cough, and recover.

How to use them safely

- Your pain will improve as your body heals.
- Use opioids **only for the shortest time possible** and at the **lowest dose needed**.
- **Do not take extra doses or increase the amount** unless your doctor tells you to.
- Opioids can cause side effects and may be addictive if taken for too long.

Common side effects and what to do

Side effect	What you can do
Constipation	Drink plenty of fluids, eat fibre (fruit/veg), and take a laxative until you stop opioids
Nausea (feeling sick)	This usually improves after the first few doses
Drowsiness or dizziness	Do not drive or operate machinery if you feel affected

Questions to ask before leaving hospital

- How long is my pain likely to last?
- How should I take my pain relief, and can I change the dose?
- What side effects should I look out for?


Reducing and stopping painkillers

- In the week after surgery, start cutting down your painkillers as your pain improves.
- Aim to stop **strong opioids within two weeks** of leaving hospital. Your GP **will not** usually prescribe more.
- Stop strong opioids first. Paracetamol should be the last painkiller you stop.


If you were already on painkillers before surgery


- If you were taking strong opioids before your operation, see your GP or specialist to discuss reducing or stopping them.
- If you take medicines for nerve pain (like gabapentin or pregabalin), also speak to your GP or specialist about whether these can be reduced or stopped.


👉 In short: Use opioids only as needed, taper them off as your pain improves, and always check with your doctor before making changes.


 Do not share your medicine with others

 Keep out of reach of children and pets

 Opioids can affect driving. It may not be safe for you to drive

 Let your doctor know if you are taking other medicines that also make you feel sleepy

 Take leftover medicines to your pharmacy for disposal

 Opioids mixed with alcohol can make you feel very drowsy

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.