

Protocol Self-Administration of Medicines (SAM)

What is self-administration of medication?

Usually, when you come into hospital the nursing/midwifery staff store and administer your medication. Self-administration of medication is when you, the patient, are given responsibility for safely storing and taking your own medicines whilst in hospital.

What is the reason for self-administration?

We believe that you are best person to understand what pain relief you need and when you need it. If you usually take your medication independently at home, self-administration allows you to maintain this independence.

What does self-administration involve?

Firstly, you will be asked if you would like to participate in the scheme. It is voluntary - you do not have to take part.

To take part in the scheme; you will be asked to bring in 1 x packet of paracetamol and 1 x packet of Ibuprofen. You will be informed when to start after delivery and given a simple chart to record what you take and when.

How and where will the medicines be stored?

Medication must be stored out of reach of any children who may be visiting, and other patients on the ward, therefore you will have access to a locked medication cabinet at your bedside. Never share your medication with anyone at any time.

How will I self-administer if I feel unwell or have sedation or an anaesthetic?

If you feel unable to self administer for any reason your midwife can take over and ensure you get the pain killers you need.

If you think that you have made an error with your medication please inform a nurse, midwife or doctor as soon as possible.

What do I do if I am still in pain?

It is important for you to talk to your midwife and ask for help and advice. Make sure you have been taking regular paracetamol and ibuprofen. Additional analgesia can be prescribed for you.

What if I am unsure about my medication?

If you decide to self-administer, the staff will still be available to help you if you have any queries. If you want to come off the scheme at any time, for any reason, you are free to do so, just inform the Registered Nurse/Midwife or Doctor.

What about my normal medication?

Please bring all of your medication when you come into hospital.

This will be reviewed by your medical team.

General Advice on Pain Relief Post Birth

Many women require some form of pain relief for a few days after the birth of their baby, especially after caesarean section. The most commonly used pain medications are paracetamol and ibuprofen. These can be bought without a prescription from a chemist or local supermarket. We suggest you obtain a supply before your baby is born.

If you need pain relief that is only available on prescription, you will be given a small supply to take home after the birth.

Contact your midwife if the pain does not settle within a week after delivery or if the pain gets worse.

All medicines contain information on the packaging or an enclosed leaflet. It is recommended that you read this information before taking any medication. Any medication should be taken at the lowest dose for the shortest possible time, to control the pain.

By taking pain medications regularly your pain should not build up. This should mean that you are able to move about and care for your baby more easily.

Storage advice

We suggest you keep your medicines in a single place, out of the reach of children. Once a dose has been measured, take it immediately to prevent it being taken by anyone else, especially children.

Paracetamol

Paracetamol comes in 500mg tablets and you can take up to two tablets four times in a 24 hour period (a total of 4000mg). This can be bought without a prescription from a chemist or local supermarket.

What are the side effects of paracetamol?

Paracetamol is an extremely safe drug for almost everyone.

However, if more than eight tablets (a total of 4000mg) are taken in any 24 hour period it can cause liver damage.

It is very important that you check whether any other tablets or medications you are taking contain any paracetamol to avoid accidentally taking more than 4000mg in a 24 hour period.

Is it safe to take paracetamol while breastfeeding?

Paracetamol is the first choice pain medication during breastfeeding. While it appears in breast milk, the amount is too small to cause any harm to your baby.

Sometimes paracetamol alone may not control your pain. In this case a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID), for example ibuprofen, can also be taken.

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory pain medications (NSAIDs)

There are different types of anti-inflammatory pain medications including ibuprofen, diclofenac and naproxen.

The most commonly used anti-inflammatory is ibuprofen (also known as Brufen and Nurofen), which is generally administered as 400mg taken three to four times a day. It can be bought without a prescription from a chemist or supermarket.

You should only take anti-inflammatory pain medications after the birth of your baby and not during pregnancy.

What are the side effects of NSAIDs?

If you have any of the following conditions you should speak to your midwife, pharmacist or a doctor before taking anti-inflammatory painkillers:

Asthma/breathing problems

Previous stomach ulcer

Previous reaction to aspirin or any non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs

Other medical conditions, for example, kidney disease, heart disease, blood clotting disorders, liver disease.

Stop taking anti-inflammatory pain medications and seek immediate medical help if you:

Pass blood in your faeces

Vomit any blood or what looks like coffee grounds

Suffer an allergic reaction, such as dizziness, itching, swelling of the lips, face or tongue

It is important to take anti-inflammatory pain medications with or after food, e.g. a small biscuit, piece of bread or with a glass of milk.

Is it safe to take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory painkillers while breastfeeding?

They are generally considered safe for a breastfeeding mother to take as the amount transferred to breast milk is small.

Aspirin is generally not recommended for treatment of pain during breastfeeding.

If paracetamol and a NSAID does not effectively control your pain, we can supply further from the postnatal ward please speak to a Midwife.

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by Royal Devon staff undertaking procedures at the Royal Devon hospitals.

© Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Designed by Graphics (Print & Design), RD&E (Heavitree)