

## ANALGESIA PRESCRIBED FOR BACK PAIN

The idea is to start with paracetamol, a drug which doesn't have many side-effects, and is very safe (assuming you do not take more than 8 daily). You could then slowly add in other drugs if paracetamol alone is insufficient to control your pain. When you add in other drugs, you should not stop the paracetamol, combinations of drugs work together more effectively than single drugs.

It is important to take paracetamol regularly (4 times daily), it only works effectively when you do this, because your liver gets rid of paracetamol very effectively within a few hours. You need to keep taking it regularly to ensure that the concentration of paracetamol in your blood is kept at a useful level to help with your pain. Once you start taking it regularly, it takes up to two days to achieve a reasonable concentration. As soon as you stop taking it regularly, the levels will soon fall to low levels that are not usually helpful.

Here is an example of how we might treat back pain:

### MINIMUM TABLETS

1. **Paracetamol** Tablets 500mg                      2 four times daily

ADDITIONAL PILLS for this acute exacerbation:

2. **Ibuprofen** Tablets 400 to 600mg              1 three times daily

ADDITIONAL PILLS for this exacerbation – to use in addition when in pain despite above tablets (note these pills will make you drowsy, so if you are taking these you should not be driving):

3. **Codeine Phosphate** 30mg                      1 or 2 up to 4 times daily (if required for pain)
4. **Diazepam** Tablets 2mg                          1 three times daily (only if required for muscle spasm)

The idea is to start with paracetamol alone, then if the pain is still present, take BOTH paracetamol AND ibuprofen, then if the pain is still present, take paracetamol AND ibuprofen AND codeine, or paracetamol AND ibuprofen AND diazepam, then if the pain is still present, take paracetamol AND ibuprofen AND codeine AND diazepam

Note that current recommendations are that anyone who is taking regular Ibuprofen, should also be prescribed **Omeprazole** 20mg once daily (an acid-suppressant) to protect their stomach from the potential side-effects of Ibuprofen.