

Occasionally it may be necessary to use other types of medication to manage your child's pain.

## **Other ways of managing your child's pain**

### **Exercise**

A simple, everyday activity like walking, swimming and dancing can ease some of the pain directly by blocking pain signals to the brain.

Activity also helps to stretch stiff and tense muscles, ligaments and joints, which can lessen pain.

### **Controlled breathing**

Concentrating on their breathing when he or she is in pain can help your child. When the pain is intense it's very easy to start taking shallow, rapid breaths which can make him or her feel dizzy, anxious or panicked. Instead, encourage slow, deep breaths. This will help your child to feel more in control of the situation and will help keep him or her relaxed and prevent any muscle tension or anxiety from worsening the pain. You can help your child to gain control of their breathing by blowing up balloons or blowing bubbles.

### **Distraction**

Help shift your child's attention onto something else, so the pain isn't the only thing on his or her mind. Help by getting your child interested in an activity that he or she enjoys or finds stimulating, for example: watching television, playing a board game, playing with a construction toy such as Lego®, doing a craft activity, reading a book or dressing up. Tapping into his or her current interests will help gain their attention.

### **Having a good sleep routine**

It is important that your child has a regular sleep routine so he or she has the best chance of sleeping through the night. Lack of sleep can also worsen pain. Your child should go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning. If your child is tired in the morning you may need to make sure he or she gets to bed earlier in the evening. A routine at bedtime will help your child to be ready for sleep. Try doing the same things in the same order each night and avoid your child watching television, playing computer games or using other electronic items in the hour before bed time. Having a warm bath or reading a story may help your child relax in preparation for going to bed. Recent research suggests that singing to your child can help to calm them – you could try singing some nursery rhymes.

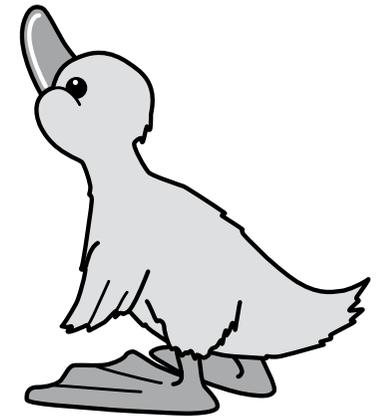
### **Socialising**

Making sure your child has contact with their friends and does his or her usual activities will keep a sense of normality in their life. It will also help to distract them from their pain.

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# **Managing Your Child's Pain at Home**



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## Why is my child in pain?

For some children it may be obvious why they are having pain, for example, they may have broken their arm, have tonsillitis or had an operation.

In some children it may not be obvious why they are having pain.

**Pain can be beneficial:** A child will withdraw from damaging situations, for example; the pain from touching a hot surface will make a child remove his or her hand. Pain can protect a damaged body part while it heals – when a child has broken a bone he or she won't move it, which can prevent further damage. A painful experience, such as shutting a finger in a door, will teach a child to avoid similar situations in the future.

Most pain goes away on its own, once the painful stimulus is removed and the body has healed, but sometimes pain carries on despite removal of the stimulus and apparent healing of the body, and sometimes pain happens when there is no physical cause.

## What is pain?

The body detects damage to its tissues and a message is sent to the brain along the spinal cord, which causes us to feel pain. This damage may be **thermal** – burns or scalds, **mechanical** – a cut or broken bone, or **chemical** – such as chilli powder in the eye. It may also be due to **inflammation** such as appendicitis or arthritis, for example.

Other types of pain are **neuropathic** pain, which is caused by damage to the nerves and **phantom** pain, commonly experienced

after amputation of a limb. Sometimes pain comes from non-physical sources and can be referred to as **psychogenic** pain.

If your child's pain is one of these types, they will still be feeling pain, but it may be more difficult to manage the symptoms with ordinary pain relief medication (analgesia) and may require a different approach to relieve it.

## Using medication to manage your child's pain

The medicines most commonly used to treat pain in children are paracetamol and ibuprofen.

**Paracetamol** works as a pain reliever by affecting chemicals in the body called prostaglandins. These are substances released in response to illness or injury, and cause pain and inflammation (swelling). Paracetamol blocks the production of prostaglandins, making the body less aware of the pain or injury. Paracetamol can also be used to manage your child's raised temperature.

Paracetamol (Calpol®, Panadol®) comes in various preparations: infant suspension, 6+ suspension, dispersible tablets, tablet melts and standard tablets. It is often included in cold and flu remedies.

Paracetamol is generally very well tolerated by children and rarely causes side effects. If your child has a liver condition, it is best to speak to your doctor before using it.

**Ibuprofen** works as a pain reliever by affecting chemicals in the body called prostaglandins. These are substances

released in response to illness or injury. They cause pain and inflammation (swelling).

Ibuprofen (Nurofen®, Calprofen®) comes in various preparations: suspension, tablet melts and standard tablets. It is often included in cold and flu remedies.

Ibuprofen is generally very well tolerated by children and rarely causes side effects, but it should not be used if your child has a bleeding disorder. There are some other conditions your child may suffer from that mean they should not take ibuprofen. Your doctor will have discussed this with you.

If your child has asthma there is a small chance they may be more likely to wheeze if they take ibuprofen. If this happens, your child should take their reliever inhaler and avoid ibuprofen in the future.

For most children paracetamol, on its own or in combination with ibuprofen, is enough to manage their pain.

When a child's pain has not been helped by paracetamol and ibuprofen, it may be necessary for a different type of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) instead of ibuprofen to be taken. An opiate drug such as codeine or oral morphine may also be used.

Opiate pain relief medications are generally for short term use only. This is because they can cause constipation, decreased breathing rate and people can build up a tolerance to them, that is to say that if used regularly, people need more of the drug to achieve the same effect, which will increase the occurrence of side effects.