

FACTS ABOUT CODIENE

WHAT IS CODIENE

Panadeine, Panadeine Forte, Mersyndol, Nurofen Plus, Aspalgin, Disprin Forte

Codeine is an opioid drug. It is used in pain-relief medications and can only be prescribed by a doctor. In the body, codeine is converted to morphine. People who use it for pain management can develop a tolerance and dependence. Some people choose to take it illegally for non-medicinal and recreational use.

EFFECTS OF CODIENE

Codeine can be taken alone, or in combination with another medication such as aspirin, ibuprofen or paracetamol, and it comes in the form of tablets, capsules or liquids (syrup).

Effects depend on the person (age, weight, size, health and tolerance), as well as the duration, the amount taken and if it is used with other drugs, including alcohol. Effects can be felt 30 minutes to one hour after taking, and wear off between 3 to 4 hours.

Short-term effects, desired or undesired, may include...

- pain relief
- euphoria, drowsiness, apathy, relaxed
- dizziness, feeling faint, tired, confused, breathing problems
- restlessness, difficulty sleeping (unusual dreams)
- mood changes
- memory loss, blurred vision, sweating, dry mouth
- heavy limbs or stiff muscles
- mild allergic rash, itching and hives
- low blood pressure, decreased heart rate, palpitations
- stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, constipation
- difficulty urinating.

Long-term effects may include...

- reduced sex drive
- irregular periods
- muscle spasms
- liver damage (especially if with paracetamol)
- stomach ulcers, anaemia or kidney problems (with ibuprofen)
- codeine dependence.

OVERDOSE

Effects from overdosing: difficulty urinating, severe constipation and obstructed bowel, agitation, cold clammy skin with bluish tinge, shallow breathing, hallucinations, seizures, unconscious, death.

If a person is experiencing an overdose or is unresponsive call 000 for an ambulance. If unconscious, put them in the recovery position. If not breathing, start CPR. Paramedics won't involve police unless the person is a danger to themselves or others.

HOW LONG DOES CODIENE STAY IN YOUR SYSTEM?

Codeine can be detected up to 2 to 3 days in urine, 24 hours in saliva or blood, and up to 3 months in hair.

TIPS FOR REDUCING RISK

Before: get a prescription from a doctor and follow medical advice. Check with your GP or pharmacist before using other medicines with it, or let your GP know if experiencing negative effects. If taking it for non-medicinal use, tell a friend what you are taking and plan how you are getting home.

During: only take the prescribed dose or if using without a prescription, take a low dose and wait to see effects before taking a bit more, don't take too much, too often.

Avoid: mixing codeine with other drugs, including alcohol, exceeding your maximum daily dose, sharing your medication with others, continuing use while experiencing negative effects.

IS CODIENE BECOMING A PROBLEM?

It may be a problem if you agree with any of these statements:

- I struggle to limit or reduce the amount of codeine I'm taking
- I spend a lot of time taking codeine or affected by it
- I often feel strong urges to take codeine
- I'm unable to perform tasks at work, school or home due to codeine use
- I have developed a tolerance to codeine, so I need to have more to feel effects
- I have withdrawal symptoms – stomach cramps, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, dilated pupils, flu-like symptoms, difficulty sleeping, aching muscles, restlessness, anxiety, depression.

TIPS FOR PROBLEMATIC CODIENE USE

- seek support from a health professional, as well as from family and friends
- avoid people, places, objects, feelings or situations associated with taking codeine
- start doing activities you enjoy that don't involve taking codeine
- look after yourself – get enough sleep, follow a healthy diet, adopt a balanced lifestyle
- set some personal goals.

CODIENE AND THE LAW

In Australia, from 1 February 2018, medicines containing codeine were no longer legally permitted to be purchased over-the-counter at pharmacies without a doctor's prescription. It is illegal to use or possess codeine without a prescription from a doctor, or to sell or give codeine to someone else for recreational use.

FOR SUPPORT – CALL DRUG ARM

CALL DRUG ARM CENTRAL INTAKE ON 07 3620 8880 DURING BUSINESS HOURS TO ACCESS FREE SUPPORT OR EMAIL INTAKE@DRUGARM.COM.AU. FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES, CALL 1300 656 800 OR EMAIL INFO@DRUGARM.COM.AU.

FOR 24/7 SUPPORT CALL:

ALCOHOL & DRUG INFORMATION SERVICE: 1800 177 833 (QLD) AND 1800 250 015 (NATIONAL).