

Medications for Chronic Pain

When it comes to treating chronic pain, medications play a crucial role. There are numerous medications available to help you manage pain.

Over-the-counter medications, such as aspirin, paracetamol or ibuprofen, may not be strong enough. The majority of chronic pain patients need prescription medications to cope with pain. Note that many prescription medications may contain paracetamol or ibuprofen, so tell your doctor if you take over the counter versions of these medications.

Although there are many types and brands of medications, what medication your doctor prescribes depends on you—your pain level, treatment goals, and overall health.

Before taking any medication, even if it's an over-the-counter medication, discuss the medication with your doctor. Some medications have serious side effects if they're not taken as directed. Also, make sure you tell your doctor about everything you're taking, including herbal remedies and supplements, because of possible drug interactions or side effects.

Types of pain killers-

- 1. Paracetamol-** Taking regular doses of upto 4 gm a day in divided doses can be a very good and safe pain relieving medicine.
- 2. Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)**
NSAIDs are a type of *analgesic* (a painkiller or pain reliever) but they also help fight inflammation.
Osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and headaches, are common conditions that NSAIDs treat.
- 3. Opioids**
In the most extreme pain cases, your doctor can prescribe you an opioid, but you'll need to be under your doctor's careful supervision when taking this medication.
Opioids—also called *narcotics*—are potent painkillers. However, taking more than a few days to months can be counterproductive due to side-effect profile, addictive potential and developing resistance against pain control.
- 4. Other Medications for Chronic Pain**
There are many other medications that can help control chronic pain and other symptoms. Below is a list of some of these medications.

a. Anti-depressants

Anti-depressants are used for reasons other than for depression, this indication is served by low doses of anti-depressants. In fact, they help control pain by changing your body's chemicals. Anti-depressants can treat chronic pain associated with diabetic neuropathy, fibromyalgia, neck pain, and low back pain.

There are 3 categories of anti-depressants:

- i. tricyclic anti-depressants (TCAs),
- ii. serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs),
- iii. selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs).

b. Anti-seizure Medications

Also known as *anti-convulsants* or *anti-epileptics*, anti-seizure medications work to suppress the nerve signals going to your brain so pain messages aren't transmitted as well. Anti-seizure medications can treat chronic pain caused by diabetic neuropathy and fibromyalgia. Examples of anti-seizure medications are pregabalin (Lyrica) and gabapentin (eg, Gabarone).

c. Corticosteroids

Steroids are powerful anti-inflammatory medications that can be taken orally or injected. If prescription-strength NSAIDs haven't reduced your pain, your doctor may recommend that you try corticosteroids. They're responsible for stopping your body from producing the chemical that causes inflammation.

d. Muscle Relaxants

These medications are used to reduce aches and pains associated with muscles strains, sprains, or spasms. Muscle relaxants can provide the pain relief you need to manage your daily activities by helping relax tight muscles and improve the quality of sleep you get. Muscle relaxants aren't typically recommended for treating chronic pain, but they may help with fibromyalgia and low back pain symptoms.

e. Topical Medications

Some medications are highly effective when used topically. Also known as topical analgesics, *topical medications*, such as a lidocaine patch (Lidoderm) can help you manage pain caused by diabetic neuropathy, osteoarthritis, and low back pain. Another example is capsaicin cream. Capsaicin, which comes from chili peppers, can temporarily reduce pain, but for maximum benefits, it needs to be applied several times a day for about 6 weeks.