



# Safe use of paracetamol and high-dose NSAID analgesia in dentistry during the COVID-19 pandemic

Crighton, A., McCann, C., Todd, E. *et al.*  
Br Dent J 229, 15-18 (2020).



## Background:



In the current COVID-19 pandemic, due to disruption or delay in dental operative procedures, the need for dental analgesia maybe extended in some instances. Dentists are familiar with using analgesia for short courses for their patients but using higher-dosages and for periods of over two weeks brings special challenges. The given summary reviews the recommendation & areas where special precautions are needed when using analgesia in the current COVID-19 situation.

## Objective of the summary:

- ✓ Provides a framework on use of adequate analgesia to dental patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ✓ Identifies patients with certain medical conditions/risks where there is a need to consult the patient's general practitioner (GP) for providing analgesia.

## Guidance on analgesia regimes for dental patients during COVID-19



As per Scottish Dental Clinical Effectiveness Programme (SDCEP), all adult patients with dental pain requiring analgesia, and with no medical problems and no regular medications should be managed with the standard analgesic regime as given in table 1.

**No specific changes have been suggested for the analgesic plan to be used for both COVID-positive and negative primary care patients.**

Table 1: Standard analgesic 5-day regimen for moderate to severe dental pain in adults

	Paracetamol	or	Ibuprofen	or	Paracetamol + Ibuprofen	or	Paracetamol + Diclofenac
<b>Moderate dental pain</b>	2 x 500 mg tablets up to four times daily (i.e. every four to six hours)		2 x 200 mg tablets up to four times daily (i.e. every four to six hours), preferably after food				
<b>Severe dental pain</b>			3 x 200 mg tablets up to four times daily, preferably after food		Without exceeding the standard daily dose or frequency for either drug		Without exceeding the standard daily dose or frequency for either drug

**Paracetamol should be the first analgesic that dentist recommend**

## Use of paracetamol in dental patients during COVID-19

- ✓ Paracetamol is a drug with established safety profile at recommended doses.
- ✓ It is the recommended analgesic for use in liver and kidney disease, however label instructions should be followed for its appropriate use.
- ✓ Patients may not be aware of different over the counter analgesics that contain Paracetamol as an active ingredient and thus may combine analgesics which may lead to accidental overdose.
- ✓ For moderate to severe dental pain, paracetamol with codeine is an effective analgesic option.

## Use of NSAIDs in dental patients during COVID-19



NSAID are recommended for treating moderate to severe dental pain in healthy individuals, however, the lowest effective dose for the shortest period should be given. High doses of NSAIDs must be used with great caution, especially in the elderly. NSAIDs should only be used with caution or at a reduced dosage in certain medical conditions or risks, as summarized in table 2.

**Table 2: Recommendations for NSAID use in specific medical problems and medication use**

Medical conditions/risks	Recommendations
Patients with existing NSAID use (e.g. Arthritis patients)	When analgesia is required beyond paracetamol consult the GP. Avoid routine use of ibuprofen or diclofenac for additional analgesia.
Patients taking low-dose daily aspirin (75 mg/day) for cardiovascular protection	NSAIDs can be prescribed if not contraindicated. Restrict ibuprofen dose to maximum 1200 mg
Patients taking oral anticoagulant medicines and patients with bleeding tendencies	In patients on warfarin, NSAIDs should not be used unless international normalised ratio (INR) monitoring is available to the patient. NSAIDs can be used in patients on novel anticoagulants, but with a risk of enhanced post-extraction bleeding.
Patients with known allergy to NSAID, history of angioedema and chronic renal failure	NSAIDs should not be used. Consult GP to discuss alternative analgesic options.
Asthma	Can be used in mild to moderate asthma, but with caution as NSAIDs can exacerbate asthma. Avoid use of diclofenac.
Patients with history of peptic ulcer disease	For patients on proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), NSAIDs can be considered. For treatment beyond 2 weeks and patients not on PPIs, consult the GP.
Patients with treated and uncontrolled hypertension	NSAIDs can be considered but for treatment beyond 2 weeks consult the GP as regular monitoring of blood pressure and renal function is recommended.
Patients with cardiac risk, significant cardiac failure with leg oedema, left ventricular dysfunction or peripheral oedema for any other reason	Moderate to high dose NSAID use poses high risk. Consult the GP for prolonged treatment. Avoid diclofenac and restrict ibuprofen dose to maximum of 1200 mg/day

## Managing analgesia during pregnancy and lactation



When used as per label, paracetamol is the recommended analgesic during pregnancy. Paracetamol is the analgesic in breastfeeding patients. NSAID's although not absolutely contraindicated in pregnancy, should be avoided in pregnancy and in exceptional circumstances can be prescribed only after consultation with the GP.

## Managing analgesia in children



Paracetamol and ibuprofen can be prescribed in children at standard age-based dosing recommendation. Aspirin and diclofenac should not be used. Consult GP if the treatment is prolonged. It is best to use a single analgesic – either paracetamol or ibuprofen based on the suitability for an individual child. The use of paracetamol and Ibuprofen should be as per defined in the product label for age and weight.

### Key findings:

- ✓ For both COVID-positive and negative primary care patients, dentists should follow the standard analgesia regimen, tailored to the patient's medical conditions/risks.
- ✓ Paracetamol, at recommended doses remains the analgesic of first choice due to its established safety profile, including in pregnant women when needed.
- ✓ Dentists should ensure to use the lowest effective dose of analgesics for the shortest period possible.
- ✓ NSAIDs maybe recommended for treating moderate to severe dental pain in healthy individuals.
- ✓ For prolonged analgesia and where appropriate, dentist should consult the patient's GP.

Abbreviations: NSAIDs, Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs; GP, General practitioner; PPIs, Proton pump inhibitors



**Panadol\* can treat fever and pain associated with COVID-19**

\*Paracetamol the active in Panadol



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