



Onset, Peak, Duration, and Side Effects of Common Pain Medications

Non-Opioid Analgesics

Medication	Onset of Action (Minutes)*	Duration of Action (Hours)*	Route of Admin.	Side Effects Comments
Acetaminophen	60	4-6	Oral	Headache, nausea, vomiting May cause hepatic complications in doses over 3000mg/24 hours in the elderly
Ibuprofen	Analgesia: 30-60 Anti-inflammatory: Up to 7 days	4-6	Oral	Nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness rash, flatulence, heartburn, anemia, hypokalemia, cardiovascular risks, peptic ulcer, GI bleeding Not recommended for use with moderate to severe renal impairment
Naproxen Sodium	Analgesia: 30-60 Anti-inflammatory: within 2 weeks	Analgesia: Up to 7 Please consider up to 12	Oral	Headache, dizziness, rash, edema, alterations in blood pressure, abdominal pain, cardiovascular risks, peptic ulcer, GI bleeding Not recommended for use with moderate to severe renal impairment

Opioid Analgesics

Medication	Onset of Action (Minutes)*	Duration of Action (Hours)*	Route of Admin.	Side Effects Comments
Codeine	30-60 Peak analgesic effect <2 hours	4-6	Oral	Sedation, nausea, vomiting, constipation, delirium, respiratory depression, pruritis
Hydrocodone (combinations)	10-20	4-6	Oral	Sedation, nausea, vomiting, constipation, delirium, respiratory depression, pruritis
Hydromorphone	15-30	3-4	Oral	Sedation, nausea, vomiting, constipation, delirium, respiratory depression, pruritis
Fentanyl	6 hours	72-96	Trans-dermal Patch	Monitor closely for respiratory depression, especially within the first 24-72 hours Rotate transdermal patch to different skin sites after removal of the previous patch Do not apply if body temperature is elevated (e.g., fever, heating pad, hot bath)
Methadone	30-60 Full analgesic effects are not attained until 3-5 days after initiation of dosing	4-6 High risk of overdose due to slow elimination Narrow therapeutic index; dose carefully	Oral	Sedation, nausea, vomiting, constipation, delirium, respiratory depression, pruritis, Life-threatening QT prolongation Monitor closely for respiratory depression, especially within the first 24-72 hours
Morphine, immediate release	15-30	4	Oral	Sedation, nausea, vomiting, constipation, delirium, respiratory depression, pruritis

Medication	Onset of Action (Minutes)*	Duration of Action (Hours)*	Route of Admin.	Side Effects Comments
Oxycodone, immediate release	10-15	3-6	Oral	Sedation, nausea, vomiting, constipation, delirium, respiratory depression, pruritis
Oxymorphone	5-10	3-6	Oral	Sedation, nausea, vomiting, constipation, delirium, respiratory depression, pruritis
Tramadol, immediate release	60 Peak analgesic effect: 2-4 hours	6	Oral	Dizziness, vertigo, constipation, nausea, headache, agitation, somnolence, anxiety, emotional lability

Muscle Relaxants

Medication	Onset of Action (Minutes)*	Duration of Action (Hours)*	Route of Admin.	Side Effects Comments
Baclofen	6-8	4-6	Oral	Drowsiness, Dizziness, nausea, confusion, headache, constipation, urinary frequency
Tizanidine	Unknown	4-8	Oral	Dry mouth, dizziness, somnolence, asthenia, constipation, blurred vision

*Unless otherwise indicated.

References

- [Medscape](#)
- [Drugs.com](#)