

# CODEINE

**Used in the following combined preparations** Co-codamol, Codafen Continus, Codis, Cuprofen Plus, Feminax, Migraleve, Nurofen Plus, Panadol Ultra, Paracodol, Pulmo Baily, Solpadeine, Solpadol, Syndol, Tylex, Veganin, and others

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Codeine is a mild opioid analgesic that is similar to, but weaker than, morphine. It has been in common medical use since the beginning of the last century, although raw opium, of which codeine is a constituent, has been used for much longer.

Codeine is prescribed primarily to relieve mild to moderate pain, and is often combined with a non-opioid analgesic such as paracetamol. It is also an effective cough suppressant and, for

this reason, is included as an ingredient in many non-prescription cough syrups and cold relief preparations.

Like the other opioid drugs, codeine is constipating, a characteristic that sometimes makes it useful in the short-term control of diarrhoea.

Although codeine is habit-forming, addiction seldom occurs if the drug is used for a limited period of time and the recommended dosage is followed.

## QUICK REFERENCE

**Drug group** Opioid analgesic (p.37), anti-diarrhoeal drug (p.68), and cough suppressant (p.52)

**Overdose danger rating** High

**Dependence rating** Medium

**Prescription needed** Yes (some preparations)

**Available as generic** Yes

## INFORMATION FOR USERS

**Your drug prescription is tailored for you. Do not alter dosage without checking with your doctor.**

### How taken/used



Tablets, liquid, injection.

### Frequency and timing of doses

4–6 x daily (pain); 3–4 x daily when necessary (cough); every 6–8 hours when necessary (diarrhoea).

### Adult dosage range

120–240mg daily (pain); 45–120mg daily (cough); 30–120mg daily (diarrhoea).

### Onset of effect

30–60 minutes.

### Duration of action

4–6 hours.

### Diet advice

None.

### Storage

Keep in original container at room temperature out of the reach of children. Protect from light.

### Missed dose

Take as soon as you remember if needed for relief of symptoms. If not needed, do not take the missed dose, and return to your normal dose schedule when necessary.

### Stopping the drug

Can be safely stopped as soon as you no longer need it.

## OVERDOSE ACTION



Seek immediate medical advice in all cases. Take emergency action if there are symptoms such as slow or irregular breathing, severe drowsiness, or loss of consciousness.

**See Drug poisoning emergency guide (p.510).**

## SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS

**Be sure to consult your doctor or pharmacist before taking this drug if:**

- You have long-term liver or kidney problems.
- You have a lung disorder such as asthma or bronchitis.
- You are taking other medicines.



### Pregnancy

No evidence of risk, but may adversely affect the baby's breathing if taken during labour.



### Breast-feeding

Should not be used by women who are breast-feeding as the drug passes into the breast milk and may harm the baby.



### Infants and children

Not for use in children under 12 years, nor for children under 18 years having tonsillectomy or adenoidectomy for obstructive sleep apnoea. Not recommended for children of any age with respiratory problems.



### Over 60

Reduced dose may be necessary.



### Driving and hazardous work

Avoid such activities until you have learned how codeine affects you because the drug may cause dizziness and drowsiness.



### Alcohol

Avoid. Alcohol may increase the sedative effects of this drug.

## POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECTS

Serious adverse effects are rare with codeine. Constipation occurs especially with prolonged use, but other side effects, such as nausea,

vomiting, and drowsiness, are not usually troublesome at recommended doses, and usually disappear if the dose is reduced.

Symptom/effect	Frequency		Discuss with doctor		Stop taking drug now	Call doctor now
	Common	Rare	Only if severe	In all cases		
Constipation	●		●			
Nausea/vomiting		●		●		
Drowsiness		●		●		
Dizziness		●		●		
Agitation/restlessness		●		●	●	
Rash/hives		●		●	●	●
Wheezing/shortness of breath		●		●	●	●

## INTERACTIONS

**Sedatives** All drugs, including alcohol, that have a sedative effect on the central nervous system are likely to increase

sedation with codeine. Such drugs include sleeping drugs, antidepressant drugs, antihistamines, and antipsychotics.

## PROLONGED USE

Codeine is normally used only for short-term relief of symptoms. It can be habit-forming if taken for extended periods, especially if higher-than-average doses are taken.