Co-codamol

Co-codamol is the name given to the combination medicine which contains paracetamol and codeine. It is available in several strengths:

- Co-codamol 8/500 codeine 8mg and paracetamol 500mg
- Co-codamol 15/500 codeine 15mg and paracetamol 500mg
- Co-codamol 30/500 codeine 30mg and paracetamol 500mg

Co-codamol 8/500 may be bought from a pharmacy. Co-codamol 15/500 and 30/500 must be prescribed.

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What can I take co-codamol for?

You can take co-codamol for mild to moderate pain. For example; backache, headache, migraine, muscle strains, period pain, toothache and aches and pains due to colds and flu.

It should only be taken for up to 3 days unless prescribed by a doctor. There is a risk of getting dependant on codeine if you take co-codamol for longer than this.

The dose of co-codamol for adults is

- one or two tablets every 4-6 hours
- up to a maximum of 8 tablets in 24 hours

It is dangerous to take more than 8 tablets in 24 hours as you may damage your liver, which can be fatal.

Can co-codamol be given to children?

Co-codamol should not be given to children under 12 years old, unless advised to by a doctor.

How does co-codamol work?

Paracetamol has been in common use for over 50 years but the way it works to reduce pain and fever is not fully known.

Codeine is a slightly stronger painkiller than paracetamol. It is from a group of medicines called opioids and is a weak relative of morphine. It mimics the action of chemicals in the body called endorphins which are the body's natural painkillers.

Co-codamol begins to ease pain about 30 minutes after a dose is taken. It usually lasts for about 4-6 hours.

When shouldn't I take co-codamol?

Do not take co-codamol if you have:

- an allergy to codeine or paracetamol
- had a recent head injury
- raised pressure inside the skull (raised intracranial pressure)
- paralytic ileus (inactivity in the intestines that prevents material moving through the gut)

Do not take co-codamol if you are taking:

- another paracetamol containing medicine. For example; co-dydramol, paracetamol, Tramacet, Migraleve and some cough and cold remedies. This is due to the risk of overdosing with paracetamol
- other codeine or dihydrocodeine containing medicines. For example; co-codaprin, co-dydramol, and some cough and cold remedies
- a mono-amine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) antidepressant (such as, isocarboxazid, moclobemide, phenelzine, tranylcypromine) or you have taken a MAOI within the last 2 weeks

Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you take co-codamol if you have:

- breathing problems (for example due to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or emphysema)
- constipation
- kidney problems
- liver problems
- low blood pressure

You should be cautious about taking co-codamol if:

- you're 75 years or older because there is a greater risk of side effects from the codeine, such as drowsiness, confusion and constipation
- you have asthma don't take co-codamol during an asthma attack as it may make the attack worse

Can I take co-codamol with my other medicines?

Co-codamol can sometimes affect other medicines. The most important interactions are listed below.

Do not take co-codamol if you are also taking:

- another paracetamol containing medicine. For example; paracetamol, co-dydramol, Tramacet, Migraleve and some cough and cold remedies. This is due to the risk of overdosing with paracetamol
- other codeine or dihydrocodeine containing medicines. For example; co-codaprin, co-dydramol, and some cough and cold remedies
- a mono-amine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) antidepressant (such as, isocarboxazid, moclobemide, phenelzine, tranylcypromine) or you have taken a MAOI within the last 2 weeks

Check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking co-codamol if you take any of the following:

- antipsychotics, e.g. haloperidol
- barbiturates, e.g. phenobarbital, amobarbital
- benzodiazepines, e.g. diazepam, temazepam
- other opioid painkillers, e.g. morphine, tramadol
- allergy medicines, e.g. chlorphenamine, diphenhydramine, hydroxyzine
- sleeping tablets, e.g. zopiclone, Nytol
- tricyclic antidepressants, e.g. amitriptyline

This is because there is an increased risk of drowsiness, confusion and sedation if co-codamol is taken.

This isn't a complete list. Ask your doctor or pharmacist or read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine to check if it's safe to take co-codamol with your other medicines.

Warfarin

Long-term use of co-codamol may increase the effect of warfarin, which can increase the risk of bleeding. However, this is unlikely to happen with occasional doses of co-codamol.

Can I take co-codamol if I'm pregnant?

Paracetamol is the first choice of painkiller if you are pregnant.

Do not take co-codamol if you are pregnant unless advised to by a doctor.

Can I take co-codamol if I'm breastfeeding?

Do not take co-codamol if you are breastfeeding.

Paracetamol is the first choice of painkiller if you are breastfeeding.

What are the possible side effects of co-codamol?

The following are some of the possible side effects from taking co-codamol. People react differently to medicines. Just because a side effect is listed doesn't mean you will get the side effect.

Codeine

Side effects from codeine include:

- contraction of the pupils (small pupils)
- confusion or inability to think clearly
- constipation
- · difficulty in passing urine
- drowsiness
- fainting
- feeling light headed or having a spinning sensation
- nausea (feeling sick)
- rash

Taking co-codamol regularly for a long time may lead to dependence which may cause you to feel restless and irritable when you stop taking the tablets.

Paracetamol

Side effects from paracetamol are rare but include:

- rash
- blood disorders
- liver and kidney damage when taken at higher than recommended doses

Will co-codamol affect my driving?

Co-codamol may cause drowsiness or make it hard to think clearly. You should not drive if you feel like this.

Is it ok to drink alcohol when taking co-codamol?

Do not drink alcohol when taking co-codamol because of the increased risk of side effects from co-codamol particularly confusion, drowsiness and impaired breathing.

Are there any foods I should avoid?

There are no known interactions with food.

What if I forget to take a dose?

If you forget to take your dose of co-codamol, the general advice is:

If the dose is less than 2 hours late - take the dose as soon as you remember and then the next dose at least 4 hours after the missed dose. Doses of co-codamol must be at least 4 hours apart.

If the dose is more than 2 hours late – take the dose as soon as you remember and then the next dose at least 4 hours after the missed dose. Doses of co-codamol should be at least 4 hours apart. Do not take more than 8 tablets in 24 hours.

Check the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine as this should give you advice about what to do.

What if I accidentally take an extra dose?

If you accidentally take an extra dose of co-codamol – miss out the next dose so that you do not take more than 8 tablets in 24 hours. Then carry on as normal. If you feel unwell or are concerned, call NHS 111 for advice by dialling 111 from any landline or mobile phone free of charge or contact your GP.

If you have taken more than the recommended total daily dose of cocodamol - seek advice <u>immediately</u> even if you feel well. Call NHS 111 for advice by dialling 111 from any landline or mobile phone free of charge, contact your GP or go to your nearest accident and emergency department (A&E).