

# NEW RULES FOR MEDICINES WITH CODEINE

All medicines with codeine will be prescription only from February 2018.

This is because codeine is an opioid medicine and should only be taken on the advice of a doctor or nurse.

## IS MY MEDICINE AFFECTED?

If you buy medicines with codeine from the pharmacy, talk with a health professional. Not all brands will be available as prescription medicines after February 2018.

## WHAT CAN HELP WITH MY PAIN?

### SHORT-TERM PAIN

For pain that only happens sometimes, or lasts a short time, there are many over-the-counter medicines that may help. Make sure to follow instructions on the pack or from your healthcare professional:

- For mild pain, consider a medicine with paracetamol, aspirin or ibuprofen
- For stronger pain, consider a medicine with diclofenac or naproxen, or with paracetamol and ibuprofen in the same pill

### LONG-TERM PAIN

Pain that lasts many months or years when there is no longer any injury can be difficult to treat. There is generally no 'cure' of long-term pain, but there are techniques to help in living with the pain.

Non-medicine treatments can include:

- heat packs or ice packs
- meditation or relaxation

- exercise – including yoga, tai chi, hydrotherapy, stretching, strengthening exercises
- psychological techniques to manage unhelpful thoughts and change behaviours

Speaking with a health professional can help make sure you get the best treatment for your type of pain.

## WHY IS CODEINE PRESCRIPTION ONLY FROM 1 FEBRUARY 2018?

- Over-the-counter codeine medicines contain low doses of codeine combined with other pain medicines
- For most people, low-dose codeine does not offer much extra pain relief in these combination medicines
- Over time the body can get used to codeine, and need higher and higher doses to feel relief from pain
- Large doses of over-the-counter codeine medicines can cause hospitalisation and death
- Stopping codeine can cause withdrawal symptoms similar to the problem the medicine was taken for in the first place