

Also called cody, sizzurp, syrup.

Codeine is a depressant drug which means that it slows down and interferes with the functioning of the brain and the body. Codeine belongs to a group of drugs known as opioids. In itself, it has little effect, however in most people it is converted to morphine in the liver which is how it works as a pain reliever. It is a prescription medicine which is prescribed by doctors to help people with pain management. Products containing codeine may be more widely known by their brand or trade name.

Generic Name

Aspirin and codeine

Ibuprofen and codeine

Paracetamol and codeine

Paracetamol, codeine and doxylamine

Trade Name

Aspalgin[®], Codral Cold & Flu Original[®]

Nurofen Plus[®]

Panadeine Forte[®], Panamax Co[®]

Mersyndol[®] and Mersyndol Forte[®], Panalgesic[®]1

What does it look like?

- Tablets or capsules
- Suppositories
- Soluble powders
- Liquids

How is it used?

- Commonly swallowed

What are the possible short-term effects?

People commonly use codeine for acute or short-term pain management. Some people may also use codeine to feel euphoric, or to feel relaxed. Other short-term effects include:

- Small pupils
- Slurred and slow speech
- Slow breathing
- Decreased heart rate or palpitations
- Sweating
- Cold clammy skin

- Itchiness
- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Nausea / vomiting
- Stomach ache
- Constipation
- Difficulty urinating

People who inject are at higher risk of additional harms such as:

- Blood-borne viruses
- Bacterial and fungal infection
- Damage to the circulatory system
- Increased likelihood of overdose.

Codeine affects people differently depending on a range of factors including how strong it is, dosage size, whether it is used with other drugs, and the individual characteristics of the person.

What are the possible long-term effects?

- Constipation
- Reduced sex drive
- Irregular periods
- Ulcers and internal bleeding
- Liver damage
- Kidney failure
- Heart attack

What are the signs of a codeine problem?

- Spending a great deal of time getting, using, or recovering from the effects
- Using in greater amounts, or for longer than originally planned
- Needing to use more to get the same effect
- Having cravings, difficulties stopping/reducing use
- Experiencing withdrawal symptoms
- Social problems including relationship issues, financial problems, impacts on study or work and legal problems

Thinking about cutting back or stopping?

The best option for people dependent on codeine is opioid treatment which should be discussed with your GP or local alcohol and drug treatment service. Withdrawal symptoms may be unpleasant, but will lessen over time. Withdrawal symptoms include diarrhoea, stomach and leg cramps, nausea, sweats and chills, increased heart rate, low mood, anxiety, irritability, poor sleep and cravings.

Codeine use and pregnancy

Codeine use may increase the risk of miscarriage, premature delivery and low birth weight. Regular codeine use throughout pregnancy can cause the baby once born, to experience withdrawal symptoms. For people who are concerned about their codeine use while pregnant or breastfeeding, it is important to talk to your doctor or health professional.

What help is available?

Adis 24/7 Alcohol and Drug Support is a 24 hour, 7 day a week confidential support service for people in Queensland with alcohol and other drug concerns, their loved ones and health professionals.

Talk to us. Anytime, anywhere.
1800 177 833

What should I do in an emergency?

Signs of a codeine overdose may include:

- Very slow breathing and/or gurgling sounds
- Slow heart rate
- Low body temperature
- Muscle twitching
- Cold clammy skin
- Blue lips and fingertips
- Skin with a bluish tinge
- Vomiting
- Confusion
- Drowsiness
- Loss of consciousness.

If the person has collapsed or lost consciousness, call an ambulance on **triple zero (000)**. If they have stopped breathing commence CPR. If they are breathing normally, place them into the recovery position and continue to monitor them.



Naloxone is a drug that can reverse an opioid overdose. It is short acting, non-addictive and it is given by injection into the muscles of the thigh of the overdosed person. It is available as an over-the-counter medication or via a script from a GP. It is recommended that anyone using opioids in a risky way should have immediate access to naloxone either to be administered to them in the event of an opioid overdose or to administer to another person who has overdosed.

For more information about naloxone speak to your doctor, local needle and syringe program or contact Adis 24/7 Alcohol and Drug Support on **1800 177 833**.