

Pain Relief After Surgery

Here is information for you about pain control after having surgery. Surgery may be a new experience for you and you may have concerns about pain. Read on to learn about different ways to control pain after surgery.

Most people have some pain after surgery. Pain warns you to protect yourself and avoid further injury. Pain can be harmful if it is not relieved after surgery. Pain can make it hard for you to take deep breaths, move and walk. This can cause problems like blood clots and pneumonia.

Your pain control after surgery

We want to help you to:

- Keep your pain under control.
- Be comfortable so that you can sleep, deep breathe, walk and visit with others.
- Manage your pain to help you heal after surgery.

You will be asked to rate your pain on a 0 to 10 scale with 0 being no pain and 10 being the worst pain.

Types of medicine used to control pain

After surgery, your doctor may order different medicines to help control your pain. They work together so that less medicine is needed while getting better pain control.

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Learn more about your health care.

- **Pain medicines:** You may be given one or more different pain medicines. Some are called opiate and others are known as NSAIDs.
- **Anti-anxiety medicines** help you feel less nervous and can help lessen your pain.
- **Anti-nausea medicines** calm your stomach and control vomiting.

Key Points

Pain medicine may not get rid of all your pain. It should keep your pain to a level that allows you to move around, eat and breathe easily.

To get the best pain control, do not wait until your pain gets very bad to ask for more pain medicine. The medicine works best at controlling the pain if you do not wait too long. Also, tell your nurse if the pain does not ease or comes back.

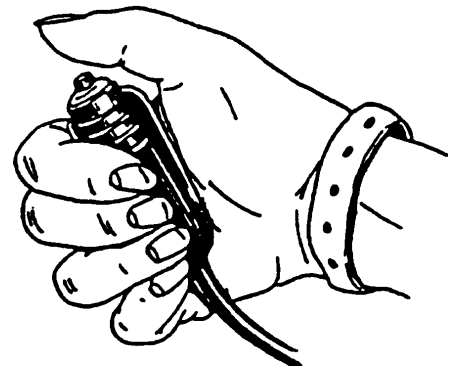
Pain medicines may be given in pills or liquid to swallow or through your IV or as a shot.

Ask your nurse for pain medicine when you feel pain increasing but before the pain is severe.

If your pain is not controlled, let your nurse know. The nurse will talk to your doctor to adjust your pain treatment.

Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)

The word analgesia means pain relief. Patient controlled analgesia (PCA) is a special pump that has pain medicine in it that connects to your IV (intravenous) tube. When you feel pain, you push a button and the pump gives a measured dose of medicine into your blood stream. **Only you should push the button, not your family members or friends.**



Your doctors order the kind and amount of pain medicine and adjust the amount to meet your needs. The pump is set so that you cannot give yourself too much medicine. This method is safe and puts you in control of your pain relief.

Epidural Analgesia

Epidural analgesia is another way pain medicine is given. A small plastic tube called an epidural catheter is placed in your back just before surgery. The catheter is about the size of fishing line. A small pump is attached to the epidural catheter. The pump puts a small amount of pain medicine through the catheter in your back at a set rate. The catheter is taped to your back and you will be able to move around in bed or walk. You can use epidural medicine until the pain has eased enough for you to take pain pills by mouth.

While you have the epidural in place, you will have a tube in your bladder to drain your urine. This is called a Foley catheter.

Other ways to manage your pain

Here are ideas for other ways to help you deal with pain. These help you deal with pain instead of taking it away. Some of these you can learn to use with practice when you do not have pain. Planning ahead or practicing a pain control method helps you use the method better when you do have pain.

- **Activity:** Start moving as soon as possible after surgery if your doctor says it is okay. Moving helps your breathing and digestion and helps you heal faster. It may hurt to move even though moving and being active helps lessen pain over time.
- **Cold and Heat:** Both cold and heat can help lessen some types of surgical pain. Some pain improves best using cold while other types of pain improve with moist heat. Talk to your nurse about which will be best for your pain.
- **Deep Breathing:** Taking slow deep breaths can help you to relax and lessen your pain.
- **Distraction:** This method teaches you to focus your attention on something other than pain. Playing cards or games, talking and visiting with family may relax you and keep you from thinking about the pain. Watching TV or reading may also be helpful.
- **Elevation:** You may need to raise or elevate the incision (if it is your arm or leg) higher than your heart. This helps to lessen swelling and improve the blood flow to ease pain. It can also help the injury heal faster.

- **Music:** Whether you listen to music, sing or hum, or play an instrument, music helps increase blood flow to the brain and helps you breathe more deeply and slowly. It increases energy and helps change your mood. Music may also cause your brain to make endorphins that further lessens pain.
- **Relaxation Techniques:** Stress and anxiety can make pain worse and may slow healing. Since it is hard to avoid stress, learn to control it. Below are different ways to help you relax:
 - ▶ Use extra pillows and blankets to stay in a position of comfort for you.
 - ▶ Make sure the room is the right temperature for you.
 - ▶ Massage of your back, hands or feet may help lessen your pain.
 - ▶ Place a cool cloth on your hands or face may make you feel better.
 - ▶ Keep the lights and noise in your room as low as possible.
 - ▶ If you are in the hospital, have the curtain pulled around your bed. This will lessen interruptions so that you can relax.
 - ▶ Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a place you find relaxing. Think about sounds or sights that you enjoy.

For more information, talk to your doctor or nurse. Also you may ask for these other patient education materials:

- About Pain and Pain Control
- Patient Controlled Analgesia
- Epidural Analgesia

✦ **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.**