Managing Your Pain After Day Surgery

Information for patients and families

Read this information to learn

- why it’s important to manage your pain
- how to control your pain when you get home
- side effects of some medicines
- other ways to control your pain
- who to call if you have any problems

It is important to talk to your surgeon about your pain management when you see them before the surgery. After your surgery, you will get better more quickly if your pain is well controlled. Since you know your own pain best, we will work with you to help you manage it.
Why is it so important to manage my pain?

Pain stresses your body. Your body heals better with less stress. Having less pain means that you can breathe deeply, cough, and move more easily. This will reduce your risk of complications.

How much pain can I expect after surgery?

Everyone is different. Our goal is to have your pain down to a level you can manage before you go home. Your pain should begin to get better over the next few days.

How can I describe my pain?

We may ask you choose a number between 0 and 10 to describe your pain.

- 0 means you have no pain
- 10 means you have the most severe pain

You can also use words like **none, mild, moderate** or **severe** to describe your pain.

How will I get my pain medicine?

While you are in the hospital, you may get pain medicine through:

- pills (tablets) by mouth
• an IV line or intravenously (medicine is put into your vein through a small needle or plastic tube called a catheter)

• a feeding tube, if you have one

• a needle into your muscle or under your skin

• a needle into your nerve (called a nerve block)

Your pain should be well controlled (mild) before you leave the hospital.
Before you go home:

- We will give you a prescription for pills to help you manage your pain.
- Fill your prescription at the nearest pharmacy before you go home.
- Ask your pharmacist any questions you have about your pain medicine or side effects.

**When should I take my pain medicine?**

Take your pain medicine as prescribed for the first 1 to 2 days to manage your pain. In the beginning, your pain may not go away completely, even after taking your medicine.

Your nurse and your pharmacist will tell you how and when to take your medicine. Follow their instructions. As your pain becomes less, you will need less medicine.

You should take your medicine 20 to 30 minutes before any activity or exercise that causes you pain.

**What are the side effects of pain medicine such as morphine, hydromorphone or Percocet?**

Some patients taking these medicines may have:

- nausea or vomiting
- itchiness (usually on several areas of their body, but no rash)
- sleepiness or difficulty thinking clearly
- slowed breathing
- constipation
- dizziness

These side effects can be managed. Talk to your nurse or doctor if you have any of these side effects.
Can I get addicted to my pain medicine?

If you have not had an addiction problem before, it is very rare that you would get addicted. Only about 1 out of 100 patients get addicted to strong medicine like morphine when they take it for pain.

Are there other ways to control my pain?

Try one or more of these along with your pain medicine:

- cold therapy: applying a cold pack to your painful area. For example, applying a cold pack to your knee after knee surgery.
- breathing deeply (this relaxes your body)
- taking your mind off of your pain by:
  - watching TV
  - listening to the radio
  - reading a book
  - imagining you are in a peaceful or relaxing place

Ask your nurse or doctor if any of these would help control your pain.

Who can I call if I have trouble managing my pain?

If you are at home and having difficulty managing your pain, call:

- your surgeon or family doctor during the day (office hours)
- 416 340 3155 after office hours. Ask to speak to your surgeon or the doctor on call.

You can also go to your nearest hospital emergency department.
At University Health Network, you and your family are an important part of the team that manages your pain.

For more information about managing your pain at UHN:

- Visit the UHN website at www.uhn.ca and search for Department of Anesthesia and Pain Management
- Visit www.uhnpatienteducation.ca and see health topic “Pain” under Search for Health Information