

Pain Control After Surgery

Pain after surgery can often be kept under control using non-opioid, over-the-counter pain medicines like acetaminophen and ibuprofen. This will help you to use less opioids.

How much pain will I have after surgery?

- You can expect to have *some* pain after surgery.
 - This is normal and part of the healing process.
 - Pain is usually worse the day after surgery. It should get better each day after that.
- Everyone feels pain in their own way.
- The goal is to make your pain low enough so you can do the things you need to care for yourself and heal:
 - Eat
 - Deep breathe
 - Walk
 - Sleep

How will I take care of my pain at home?

You will take care of your pain after surgery by taking acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) **around the clock** while you are awake. Switching back and forth between these medicines helps you to get the best pain control.

How do I switch back and forth between my medicines?

- Take 650mg of acetaminophen (2 pills of **regular strength, 325mg acetaminophen**) every 6 hours while awake. **Do not take more than 3000mg of acetaminophen in 24 hours.** You will need to look carefully for regular strength acetaminophen. There is also a 500 mg dose.
- **In between** take 600 mg of ibuprofen (3 pills of 200 mg) every 6 hours while awake. **Do not take more than 3200mg of ibuprofen in 24 hours.**

Switching these medicines means you are taking a dose every 3 hours.

This is an example of how to switch your medicines, if you start at 12pm:

12:00 PM	Acetaminophen (Tylenol) 650 mg (2 pills of 325 mg)
3:00 PM	Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) 600 mg (3 pills of 200 mg)
6:00 PM	Acetaminophen (Tylenol) 650 mg (2 pills of 325 mg)
9:00 PM	Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) 600 mg (3 pills of 200 mg)
Continue switching every 3 hours for 3 days, until no longer needed.	

What else can I do to help lower my pain?

Pain medicines are only one part of your pain control plan. You can also:

- Use heating pads or ice packs if your surgeon says it is okay. Never put ice right on your skin. Use a towel to wrap the ice packs.



- Try non-drug options such as relaxation. You can listen to music, read, talk to others, and take slow deep breaths.

What if I still have pain?

- You will receive a prescription for a small amount of an opioid pain medicine like Oxycodone or Tramadol.
- You may use your opioid for **severe pain** after surgery.
 - Severe pain is pain that makes it hard to eat, breathe deeply, walk or sleep. Severe pain is pain that is not under control with scheduled Tylenol and Motrin.
- Do not take more than 1 opioid pill every 4-6 hours, and only for **severe pain**.
- If you are still having severe pain, call your surgeon or the number you were given when you left the hospital.
 - Never take more opioid pills than prescribed. Do not take them more often than prescribed.
 - Do not use your opioid pills for anything other than your **severe** surgical pain. This means you should not use your opioids to help you with anxiety, to help you sleep or for pain that is not from your surgery.
- Stop taking the opioids as soon as you can.

What is an opioid?

Opioids are strong prescription pain medicines that may have side effects. Some of the side effects are dizziness, nausea, vomiting and constipation. Opioid use puts you at risk of dependence, addiction or overdose if taken for more than a week.

How do I store my opioids in a safe way?

- Store your opioids in private, secure areas. A drawer or cabinet with a lock is a good place. They should be out of sight and reach of children, teens and pets.
- Do not store your opioids in places where others can easily find them.
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What should I do with my unused opioids?

72% of opioids given to surgical patients do not get used. This creates a chance for misuse. Among those who misused prescription opioids, over 50% got them for free from a friend or relative. Sharing or selling of opioids is a felony in Michigan.

How can I safely get rid of my unused opioids?

Find a medication drop box near you at: <http://michigan-open.org/takebackmap/>

- Find a Medication Take Back Event near your home or work.
- As a last resort, use your home trash:
 - Put opioids in a plastic bag. Do not crush. Mix with used coffee grounds or kitty litter.
 - Throw into your trash.
 - Cross out all of your information on the pill bottle before you recycle or throw it away.