

Acute Pain After Surgery: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

It's common to have some pain after surgery. Pain doesn't mean that something is wrong or that the surgery didn't go well. But when the pain is severe, it's important to work with your doctor to manage it. It's also important to be aware of a few facts about pain and pain medicine.

- You are the only person who knows what your pain feels like. So be sure to tell your doctor when you are in pain or when the pain changes. Then he or she will know how to adjust your medicines.
- Pain is often easier to control right after it starts. So it may be better to take regular doses of pain medicine and not wait until the pain gets bad.
- Medicine can help control pain. But this doesn't mean you'll have no pain. Medicine works to keep the pain at a level you can live with. With time, you will feel better.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
 - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
 - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- If you take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve), read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Do not take two or more pain medicines at the same time unless the doctor told you to.
- Do not drink alcohol while you are taking pain medicines.
- Try to walk each day if your doctor recommends it. Start by walking a little more than you did the day before. Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk. Walking increases blood flow. It also helps prevent pneumonia and constipation.
- To prevent constipation from opioid pain medicines:
 - Talk to your doctor about a laxative.
 - Include fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains in your diet each day. These foods are high in fiber.
 - Drink plenty of fluids, enough so that your urine is light yellow or clear like water. Drink water, fruit juice, or other drinks that do not contain caffeine or alcohol. If you have kidney, heart, or liver disease and have to limit fluids, talk with your doctor before you increase the amount of fluids you drink.
 - Take a fiber supplement, such as Citrucel or Metamucil, every day if needed. Read and follow all instructions on the label. If you take pain medicine for more than a few days, talk to your doctor before you take fiber.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your pain gets worse.
- Your pain is not controlled by medicine.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you have any problems.

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