

After a surgery, you would usually experience pain at the operation site, resulting in discomfort and possibly a delay in the recovery process. The good news is that you need not bear with the severe pain and discomfort as there are many methods of relieving or reducing your pain.

Managing

good pain management is important for greater comfort. It helps you to do deep breathing exercises, get out of bed and start walking sooner as well as avoid problems such as developing a chest infection. In turn, these would aid you in a faster recovery and an earlier discharge from the hospital.

What You Can Do

Before surgery

Before a surgery, find out about the nature of your surgery. Being well-informed about the type of operation you are having will help reduce your anxiety.

You may obtain the following information from your doctor or nurse:

- * Intensity of pain after the surgery.
- * How long the pain will last.
- * Type of pain-relieving medicines that will be given after the surgery.
- * Side effects that may occur with the medication.
- * How often you will receive the medication.

After surgery

It is important to know how to manage pain:

- * Ask for pain-relieving medicines as soon as you feel slight discomfort.
- * Take pain-relieving medicines before you start to do exercises. It is harder to ease the pain once it has set in.

You can help the doctor/nurse manage your pain better by giving him/her an indication of how much pain you are experiencing. You can do so by rating your level of pain on a scale of 1 to 10.

Numeric Pain Intensity Scale

- 0 = No pain
- 5 = Moderate pain
- 10 = Worst possible pain

This allows your doctor and nurse to know how you are feeling and the extent that the pain-relief treatment is helping you. They may change your treatment accordingly to improve your comfort level.

Pain-relieving Medicines

There are different types of drugs available to control pain after a surgery and different methods of administering pain medicines.

Types of pain-relieving medicines

1. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
 - Help reduce swelling and soreness.
 - Relieve mild to moderate pain.
2. Opioids
 - Relieve moderate to severe pain.
3. Local anaesthetics
 - Relieve severe pain.
 - Administered either near your operation site or through a small tube in your back.



Pain

After A Surgery

Methods of administering pain-relieving medicines

1. Oral medication (tablet/capsule)

- Taken orally.
- Common medicines used are paracetamol, naproxen and tramadol.

2. Injections

a) Through the muscle

- Medicine is given via an injection into the muscle of your upper arm, thigh or buttock.
- Common medicine used is pethidine for relief of moderate to severe pain.

b) Through the vein

- Medicine is given via a small tube, which is inserted in your vein.
- Morphine or pethidine is commonly used to treat moderate to severe pain.
- Medicine can be administered continuously with the use of a syringe pump or a patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) pump. The latter allows you to control the amount of medicine needed to manage the pain.

c) Through the back (epidural)

- Medicine is given via a small tube, which is inserted into your

back after numbing the skin. The tip of the tube is just outside the sack containing the spinal fluid and nerves.

- Local anaesthetics and opioids can be given through the tube for up to three days after the surgery to provide a band of numbness in the area of surgical procedure.

3. Nerve Blocks

- Medicine is given via a small tube, which is inserted near the operation site.
- Common medicines used are local anaesthetics.

Other Ways of Managing Pain

To increase your comfort level, here are some useful tips to help you manage mild to moderate pain.

Support your wound site

It is normal to experience some pain at the operation site when you cough, sit or get out of bed. Supporting your wound site during these activities will help to reduce the pain.

Apply physical agents (cold or hot packs)

Place well-wrapped cold or hot packs to the area where you feel pain. Keep it at a comfortable level that does not irritate your skin. They are safe to use and have no side effects.