

Pain management after upper limb surgery



Pain control

Pain is normal after surgery. Our goal is to reduce pain to a level that allows you to do light activities without severe pain. You will not be completely pain free, but your pain level should be manageable during your recovery. The best way to treat post-operative surgical pain is to use more than one medication as each works differently. **Acetaminophen and anti-inflammatories (Ibuprofen or Celecoxib) are the key medications to control your pain.** Opioids (Oxycodone, Tramadol and MS-Contin) can help with pain control but have side effects and potential for addiction. Expect your need for opioids to decrease within a few days of surgery.

A **nerve block** may be a component of your post-operative pain management. If this is part of your care, it is important to take the recommended pain medication **before** the freezing wears off and the feeling returns to your arm. This is especially important if you are going to bed for the evening.

It is important to follow the activity and positioning information that is on the discharge instructions as these may also assist with reducing pain.

Medications:

One or all of these medications will be prescribed depending on the type of surgery performed. Your surgical team will indicate on the chart which medications you are to take. The medications in bold (acetaminophen and ibuprofen) can be purchased without a prescription. The other medications require a prescription. If you are prescribed Oxycodone or Tramadol, this is only to be taken if needed.

- **Acetaminophen** 650 mg every 4 hours
- **Ibuprofen** 400 mg every 6 hours
- Celecoxib 100 mg twice a day
- Gabapentin 200 mg twice a day
- Oxycodone 5 mg **or** Tramadol 50 mg every 4 hours (*as needed*)
- MS-Contin 15 mg twice a day

Medication safety:

- Follow the instructions for your prescription medications as advised by your pharmacist.
- While you take your prescribed medications, do not take other medications that include acetaminophen (Tylenol) or NSAID medications (naproxen, indomethacin, etc.) because it can result in overdose.
- Do **not** drink alcohol while taking prescription pain medications. Using both at the same time can cause severe health problems or even death.
- Never take more than your prescribed dose of prescription pain medications.
- **Do not let anyone else use your prescription pain medications.** Store your prescription pain medications in a safe place, where children and pets cannot reach them.
- Prescription pain medications that contain opioids like oxycodone and MS-Contin can slow your breathing and heart rate. If they slow your breathing too much, it can cause death. **If you become too sleepy or have breathing problems call 911 right away,** and do not take your next dose of prescription pain medications.

Medication scheduling:

The times that the different medications are taken are spread out through the day so that your pain management is better optimized (Note: you may not be prescribed all the medications below). **Begin taking your medications as soon as you get home according to the schedule below.**

Time	<input type="checkbox"/> Acetaminophen	<input type="checkbox"/> Ibuprofen	<input type="checkbox"/> Celecoxib	<input type="checkbox"/> Gabapentin	<input type="checkbox"/> Oxycodone or Tramadol	<input type="checkbox"/> MS-Contin	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 am							
2	Acetaminophen				Oxycodone or Tramadol		
3							
4		Ibuprofen					
5							
6	Acetaminophen				Oxycodone or Tramadol		
7							
8			Celecoxib	Gabapentin		MS-Contin	
9							
10	Acetaminophen	Ibuprofen			Oxycodone or Tramadol		
11							
1200 (noon)							
1 pm							
2	Acetaminophen				Oxycodone or Tramadol		
3							
4		Ibuprofen					
5							
6	Acetaminophen				Oxycodone or Tramadol		
7							
8			Celecoxib	Gabapentin		MS-Contin	
9							
10	Acetaminophen	Ibuprofen			Oxycodone or Tramadol		
11							
12 (midnig ht)							

Disposal of prescription medication:

- When you no longer require the medications that have been prescribed, and you have leftover, return them to your pharmacy where they can be disposed of properly.

Opioid refills:

- You will usually have enough prescription pain medications, so it's unlikely you will need a refill. Pain pill prescriptions cannot be renewed after normal office hours. If you think you will run out of pain medications, please contact your surgeon's office during normal office hours or contact your family physician for renewals.