

Pain Management After Hip Surgery

What you should know

Pain after hip surgery is normal and to be expected. Controlling pain is an important step to your recovery. Use this handout to learn more about what you can do to help manage your pain as your body begins to heal. We want you to participate fully in your recovery.

Creating a pain management plan

Normally it takes a few days or even a couple of weeks to feel better. Pain can vary from person to person so it is important to create your own pain management plan. Use the following questions to help set your goals and develop a plan. Knowing the answers to these questions can help you to develop a pain management plan with your doctor.

- ♦ How much pain can I expect, where will I feel the pain and how long the pain is likely to last?
- ♦ What pain control methods have or have not worked for me in the past?
- ♦ What other treatments, such as massage, relaxation or music, have helped me in the past?
- ♦ What allergies or reactions do I have to medications, if any?
- ♦ What pain rating will allow me to return to normal activities? (Everyone is different.)
- ♦ What concerns do I have about taking pain medication?
- ♦ If my clinician prescribes pain medicine, what is the timing for reducing, and then no longer using, these medicines?

Using medicine safely

Opioids are powerful medicines that may be used for a short time to relieve pain when you have a severe injury or surgery. Opioid medicines do not cure a health problem and do not get rid of pain. Rather, they help you manage pain while your body is healing.

Side effects of opioids

Please keep the following in mind if your doctor has prescribed opioids for short-term management of your pain:

- ♦ Although opioids may be effective in relieving pain for a short time, they actually make pain worse over time. Opioids affect your nervous system by increasing your sensitivity so you experience more intense pain.
- ♦ Opioids can cause nausea, vomiting, depression, constipation, low sex hormones, breathing difficulty and death.
- ♦ The longer you take opioids, the higher the dose you will need to take relieve pain. This can quickly lead to dependency.
- ♦ Addiction to opioids is common. It simply means the use of opioids has become out of control. Talk with your clinician if you are worried that you or a loved one may be affected by addiction to opioids.
- ♦ Talk to your clinician about driving while taking opioids. In Minnesota and Wisconsin (and many other states) it is against the law to drive while taking opioids.
- ♦ Opioids can be deadly, even when taken as prescribed. Opioids are even more deadly when taken with alcohol or medicines that depress your central nervous system, such as prescription sleep aids.

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Safe disposal of unused opioid medicine

- ♦ If you are prescribed opioids, take them as directed. Your pain may be managed before you have taken all the opioid medicine in your prescription.
- ♦ Dispose of the unused opioid medicine in a safe and timely manner. Keeping unused opioids in your home after your pain is managed puts you at higher risk for robbery and other people having access to this medicine.
- ♦ Talk with your pharmacy or local law enforcement to learn how you can safely dispose of your unused opioid medicine. Your care team can also help locate the most convenient option for you.

Other ways to manage pain

Pain can often be controlled just as well without opioids. Methods other than medication also can help control pain after surgery. These methods include:

- ♦ **Positioning.** Adjusting your body into different positions can relieve pressure.
- ♦ **Cold therapy.** Cold therapy, such as using cold packs or ice, helps reduce swelling and inflammation.
- ♦ **Relaxation.** Meditation, prayer and yoga help relieve anxiety and muscle tension.
- ♦ **Massage.** Massage relieves tension in tired, achy parts of the body.
- ♦ **Music.** Music can help take your mind off the pain.
- ♦ **Positive thinking.** People who stay positive and hopeful feel less pain or are not as bothered by pain as are people who do not think as positively.
- ♦ **Staying active.** When you have pain, staying in bed can be harmful. Getting back to regular activities is important in your recovery even if you experience some discomfort. If you are inactive for too long, it can increase stiffness and pain.