

Managing Surgical Pain: Non-opioid Options and Safe Opioid Use



Everyone heals in a different way. It is normal to feel some discomfort or pain after surgery. This should improve in a few days. Your WellSpan team wants to help you create a safe plan for a comfortable recovery.

Your surgical team may use treatments other than opioids during your surgery that will help you feel less pain after surgery. Before taking opioid pain pills, you can try these safe treatments after surgery to reduce pain:

- Deep breathing, meditation and other exercises to relax can reduce muscles getting tight.
- Take your mind off the pain by thinking about other things. Picture times when you were happy and relaxed. You can read a book, talk to a friend, listen to calming music or watch a favorite movie
- Talk with your WellSpan team about other treatment options that might be right for you, such as:
 - Using ice to help with numbing and swelling.
 - Raising the area and using dressings or compression wraps (if told to do so by your care team.)
 - Doing stretching exercises or physical therapy (depending on the type of surgery.)
 - Taking acetaminophen or NSAIDs (like ibuprofen or naproxen) to help block pain signals. They will also lessen swelling and soreness. These may be the most important medicines you take after surgery if your team says they are right for you.

If you and your doctor decide that opioids are necessary:

Remember there are serious side effects and risks – even if you are careful. Continue other treatments your WellSpan team told you about so that your pain is relieved with fewer opioids.

- Side effects may include nausea, constipation, confusion, and sometimes even more pain.
- Opioids may affect your judgment and decision-making. Talk with your WellSpan team about when it is safe to drive or operate machinery.

- Dependency can happen, including withdrawal symptoms.
- Addiction is possible, even when taken as directed for pain.
- Write down when you take your pills and track your pain level. Share this with the WellSpan team during follow-up visits and calls.
- Do not take opioids with alcohol or other drugs like sleeping pills to avoid accidental overdose.
- Tell your doctor about all medicines you take. Do not take any other pills without talking to your doctor or pharmacist first.
- Always lock up your medicines. Your prescribed pain medicine is only for you and should never be shared.
- Always get rid of leftover medicines. Many police stations and some WellSpan pharmacies have take-back boxes. Call your pharmacy to find out where to take leftover pills or for help on how to get rid of them.
- If you have trouble stopping or are afraid you are craving your opioid pain medicine, let us know. We can help.

Pain is a normal part of healing Your WellSpan team wants to keep you safe so you can get back to enjoying life as soon as possible.

- Always use other treatments first to help improve your pain without relying only on opioid medicine.
- Make sure all your questions are answered before you take opioids.
- Talk with your doctor if pain gets worse at any time.
- For more information, visit www.wellspan.org/opioids

If you or a family member have struggled with addiction, let us know. We can develop a safe pain treatment plan that works for you. For help with addiction, contact 1-844-PHILHAVEN or your WellSpan health care team.

WellSpan surgical pain video
www.wellspan.org/video