



Post-operative Pain Medication Instructions

Pain medication management after surgery is done with the goal of **limiting pain** to allow you to recover. However, the goal is **not** to completely eliminate pain as this can lead to taking more medication than is needed and puts you at risk of side effects. The type of surgery and the expected post-operative pain course are considered when prescribing pain medication.

Opioids are powerful “painkiller” medications commonly prescribed to treat pain after an injury or surgery. Risks of opioid use include development of tolerance (requiring more for it to work over time), drowsiness, addiction, and constipation. Because of these risks you must try to stop taking it or significantly limit intake within 1-2 weeks of surgery if prescribed.

For the majority of procedures, **Ibuprofen and Tylenol (acetaminophen)** work well for pain control. If you are unable to take these medications, please let your surgeon know. They work well together to control pain and inflammation and should be considered your main pain medication.

For bigger surgeries or for patients who may need opioid medication for pain control, a personalized regimen will be recommended. Typically, Norco (Hydrocodone/Tylenol) or Oxycodone will be prescribed from this category.

Pain medication options:

- **Ibuprofen** 800mg 3 times a day with food (anti-inflammatory)
- **Acetaminophen** 500mg 3-4 times a day (pain reliever)
- **Oxycodone** 5mg every 4-6 hours a day (for breakthrough pain)
- **Norco** (325 acetaminophen/5mg hydrocodone) every 4-6 hours a day for breakthrough pain

The following medications may also be prescribed, depending on your symptoms:

- **Docusate or Colace** (Stool softener/prevents constipation)
- **Ondansetron or Zofran** (Prevent/treats nausea)
- **Ketorolac or Toradol** (high strength anti-inflammatory)

Additional factors that may be helpful

- **Ice:** A typical anti-inflammatory. Place ice on the operative site hourly (20min on and 40min off). Repeat
- **Elevation:** fingertips should be kept above the level of the elbow and both above the level of the heart if possible
- Understand that the most painful times are usually at nighttime and during physical therapy.
- Medication usually takes 30-60 minutes to begin working.