



Treating Pain after Outpatient Surgery

Nationwide Children's Hospital wants to make your child as comfortable as possible. Having pain is normal after surgery, but there are ways to ease the pain.

How pain is evaluated

Sometimes it can be hard to know what is causing your child's behavior or mood. It could be pain, anxiety, stress, or confusion.

Possible signs of pain include:

- crying
- facial cues (frown, wide eyes, grimaces)
- leg movement
- irritability
- shaking or twitching
- how hard or easy it is to soothe your child
- favoring a certain part of the body.

You can use the scale below to help you figure out pain in your child. Ask how he or she feels, how bad the pain hurts, or which face looks like the child feels. This may give you a better idea of your child's pain level and help you to know what to do to help.

Remember that you know your child best. Trust your instincts regarding your child's pain. (See the **Faces** chart at the top of Page 2.)



Ways to help comfort your child and ease pain

Distraction is a great way to comfort your child. Examples of distraction can include:

- a favorite movie
- reading a favorite book
- aromatherapy
- or even something as simple as soothing strokes on the arms or legs.
- soft music
- blowing bubbles
- quiet play

Moving your child around to ensure that he or she is comfortable is also a good way to reduce pain.

Elevating a limb that has been operated on so it is at or above the level of the heart will also reduce swelling, which may take away pain.

Also, using warmth or cold can sometimes help. For the first 24 hours, use things like ice packs to decrease pain and swelling.

What to expect after surgery

Children will likely feel tired after surgery. This tiredness can last for several hours. Other common side effects include nausea, dizziness, light-headedness, and general discomfort. Some discomfort is to be expected. After surgery, you will use the pain control techniques above, as well as medicine, to treat your child's pain. It is important that your child rest the day of and the day after surgery, and that he or she not drive a vehicle or make any important decisions during that time.

Medicines used to control pain

Typically, your child will be using acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®) for pain control. Unless your child's doctor tells you different, medicine should be given every three (3) hours. Alternate between the two, so your child is getting each medicine six (6) hours apart. For example, if your child was given acetaminophen at 12:00, he or she would get ibuprofen at

Pain Medicine Administration Chart

3:00, and then acetaminophen again at 6:00. Please refer to your child's discharge instructions for dosing information or call your pharmacist.

Your child's nurse will go over any pain medicines given at the hospital that will affect when you would give medicines at home.

Your child may also be prescribed an opioid to help control the pain. Please refer to Helping Hand HH-IV-169, *Important Facts to Know When Taking Opioids*. This important Helping Hand will give you information about opioids. **If this opioid medicine is not combined with any other medicine (see below), you may give it for breakthrough pain not controlled by the acetaminophen or ibuprofen as prescribed.**

This opioid (Norco/Lortab/Percocet) may be combined with acetaminophen. Your child's doctor will tell you what to do. It is **very important** that you not give additional acetaminophen when giving this combination pain medicine. When it is time in the alternating schedule to give your child acetaminophen, evaluate his or her pain. If the pain is mild or moderate, consider giving acetaminophen **instead of** the prescribed opioid medicine.

Other actions may have been taken today to stop or ease your child's pain, including nerve blocks, local anesthetics, and certain other measures. If any of these methods were used, your child's nurse will discuss them with you.

At home

It is important to stick to the recommended medicine schedule (alternating ibuprofen, acetaminophen, and/or prescribed pain medication) after surgery to ensure your child's pain stays well-controlled. Your child should have less pain over time after surgery.

Your child may need this rotating schedule up to 48 hours after surgery. If the pain is uncontrolled with the alternating schedule or after 48 hours your child still needs pain medicine every three hours, please contact the child's surgeon's office.

When to call the doctor

Call your child's doctor's office at (phone) _____ if:

- Your child still needs medicine to control the pain 48 hours after surgery.
- You have any questions or concerns with your child's pain control.

For acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Motrin) follow directions on the box.

Acetaminophen start time is: _____. Follow directions on box for next doses.

Ibuprofen start time is: _____. Follow directions on box for next doses.

Opioid: Drug Name: _____.

Dose: _____ mL (Liquid) OR _____ tablet **AS NEEDED** every _____ hours.

*Opioid has acetaminophen combined in it Yes No. **If Yes, do not give more acetaminophen** unless your child's doctor tells you to.

***ONLY** give opioids if your child's pain is still uncontrolled with the rotation of acetaminophen and ibuprofen.

Day of Surgery	Medicine	Check-off	Time Given	Opioid as needed ONLY
Dose 1	Acetaminophen			
2	Ibuprofen			
3	Acetaminophen			
4	Ibuprofen			
5	Acetaminophen			
6	Ibuprofen			
7	Acetaminophen			
8	Ibuprofen			
Next Day After Surgery				
Dose 1	Acetaminophen			
2	Ibuprofen			
3	Acetaminophen			
4	Ibuprofen			
5	Acetaminophen			
6	Ibuprofen			
7	Acetaminophen			
8	Ibuprofen			

AFTER 48 HOURS: Stop regular or scheduled Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen and give either as needed

Pain Medicine Administration Chart

2nd Day after Surgery	Times Given
Acetaminophen	
Ibuprofen	
Opioid	
3rd Day after Surgery	
Acetaminophen	
Ibuprofen	
Opioid	
4th Day after Surgery	
Acetaminophen	
Ibuprofen	
Opioid	
5th Day after Surgery	
Acetaminophen	
Ibuprofen	
Opioid	
6th Day after Surgery	
Acetaminophen	
Ibuprofen	
Opioid	
7th Day after Surgery	
Acetaminophen	
Ibuprofen	
Opioid	