

Treating Pain After Outpatient Surgery

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

How is pain evaluated?







Sometimes it can be hard to know if pain, anxiety or stress is causing discomfort.

Possible signs of pain are crying, facial cues, leg movement and how easily the patient can be comforted. Parents can also help us understand their own child's needs. Nurses and doctors use guides called pain scales to measure pain. There are different pain scales that can be used based on the patient's age. For younger children, the pain scale uses visual signs to evaluate pain (see chart below).

Subjective pain scales:

Faces: More appropriate for preschool and young school children.

Show me how you feel by pointing to the face:

					
0	2	4	6	8	10
NO HURT	HURTS LITTLE BIT	HURTS LITTLE MORE	HURTS EVEN MORE	HURTS WHOLE LOT	HURTS WORST

Older children and adults can rate their pain on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being in no pain and 10 being the worst pain.

Ways that your child might be given medicine:

- **IV:** Directly into the vein
- **PO (by mouth):** Once the child is able to eat or drink

What can you do to help?

It is important for your child to take deep breaths and cough from time to time. Blowing bubbles can be fun and help the lungs too. If there is a surgical wound, try splinting the affected area. Splinting is holding a pillow or folded blanket and gently applying pressure over the wound. The child should cough or take a deep breath during splinting.

Try different positions to decide what is most comfortable. Your nurse can make suggestions about safe positions. It is also important to move while in bed, and walk when allowed to get out of bed.

Stroking your child's hands, arms, legs or head may be comforting. Small children may be more comfortable when someone holds them.

Try to distract your child from the pain and make him or her as comfortable as possible. Suggestions include:

- Keep the room quiet and dim the lights
- Play soft music
- Watch a favorite movie or television show
- Read books



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Important words to know:

- **Nerve block:** Involves placement of local anesthesia (numbing medicine) around the nerve(s) to numb them for certain procedures. A single shot usually lasts around 12 to 24 hours, which allows the child to have continuous pain relief while still able to move the lower legs and begin physical therapy.
- **PNC (Peripheral Nerve Catheter):** Depending on the type of procedure, your surgeon may choose to place a small catheter (a hollow plastic tube) that gives a continuous amount of numbing medicine over several days (usually 3 to 5 days) next to the nerve. This catheter can be safely removed by the family at home.

How do patients usually feel after surgery?

Patients may feel tired after surgery. This could be due to stress and side effects of some pain medicines.

Other things to look for after surgery:

- Itching
- Constipation
- Upset stomach
- Rash
- Slower breathing

If any your child experiences any of the above, please talk to the child's nurse or doctor.

What medicines are used to control pain?

There are multiple medicines that may be offered to control pain. Outpatient medicines are given by mouth and generally include acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Motrin/Advil) or opioids (hydrocodone or oxycodone).

General post-surgery pain management strategy:

For most children the surgeon will recommend alternating Tylenol and Motrin every three hours for the first two days after surgery. Your child's surgeon may prescribe an opioid (usually hydrocodone or oxycodone) which is recommended only on an as-needed basis. These medicines can be used in addition to Tylenol or Motrin, but they should only be given if your child is still in pain while using the alternating Tylenol and Motrin schedule.

Your child might be prescribed an opioid that is a combination product containing acetaminophen, including hydrocodone/acetaminophen (Norco) or oxycodone/acetaminophen (Percocet). For children who are prescribed these as-needed pain medicines, give this medicine in place of the acetaminophen (Tylenol) when needed. This is only necessary if you feel that your child's pain is uncontrolled on the alternating schedule of Tylenol and Motrin AND you were prescribed a combination opioid medication. In summary, do not give a combination opioid within 4 to 6 hours of giving your child Tylenol.

Many times ketorolac (also known as Toradol), which is an IV medication similar to Motrin, is given during the surgery to help with pain. If this happens, the first dose of Tylenol should not be given until three hours after the ketorolac was given. If ketorolac was not given, the first dose of Tylenol should be given as soon as you are home or as instructed by hospital staff.

48 hours after the surgery, Tylenol and Motrin should no longer be given scheduled every three hours, and should be only given as needed for pain.

The next page is a chart with all of this information for you to keep track of what medicine you have given your child and when the next dose is due. Your child's nurse or healthcare provider should discuss this with you prior to leaving the hospital.

It is important to note that these medicines are dosed based on your child's weight, so make sure to see that your child does not take more medicine than prescribed and that he or she follows the instructions.

Other Medicines:

- **Muscle relaxers:** May be given for certain surgeries to relieve muscle spasms (many times described as muscle cramps), which is a pain that opioids generally cannot control. It is important, unless your doctor tells you to, to not give muscle relaxers at the same time as opioid pain medicines because of the risk for slowed breathing.
- **Stool softeners:** Recommended in patients taking opioids because opioids increase the risk of developing constipation. Your doctor may give you instructions or prescribe a stool softener for your child. While your child is taking a stool softener, it is important to make sure that he or she is drinking plenty of fluids to prevent stomach cramping.

How long after surgery do patients need pain medicine?

Every patient is different. Some need only a small amount of pain medicine, while others might require a larger amount. The most important thing is to monitor your child's pain, give medicine when it is needed and

over time see a decrease in the pain.

Our number one goal is to provide the best care possible at Nationwide Children's Hospital. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to ensure your child's pain is controlled.

PAIN MEDICINE ADMINISTRATION CHART

Ketorolac was given at (if given):

Tylenol start time is (3 hours after Ketorolac):

Motrin start time is (3 hours after Tylenol):

Opioid: Drug Name: _____ (if opioid has acetaminophen in it hold the acetaminophen)

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

ONLY give opioids if your child's pain is still uncontrolled with the rotation of Tylenol and Motrin

POST-OP MEDICINE CHART

Please use this table to write down when medicines are given

Please give _____ mL of Children's Tylenol (Children's Acetaminophen 160mg/5 mL)

OR

Please give _____ tablets of oral Tylenol (Each tablet contains _____ mg of acetaminophen)

Please give _____ mL of Children's Motrin (Children's Ibuprofen 100mg/5 mL)

OR

Please give _____ tablets of oral Motrin (Each tablet contains _____ mg of ibuprofen)

Day of Surgery

Dose Number	Medication	Check-off	Time Given	Opioid as needed ONLY Drug: _____
1	Tylenol			
2	Motrin			
3	Tylenol			
4	Motrin			
5	Tylenol			
6	Motrin			
7	Tylenol			
8	Motrin			

Next Day After Surgery

Dose Number	Medication	Check-off	Time Given	Opioid as needed ONLY Drug: _____
1	Tylenol			
2	Motrin			
3	Tylenol			
4	Motrin			
5	Tylenol			
6	Motrin			
7	Tylenol			
8	Motrin			

After 48 Hours: Stop regular or scheduled Tylenol and Motrin and give either as needed

2nd Day after Surgery	
Medication	Time Given
Tylenol	
Motrin	
Opioid	
3rd Day after Surgery	
Medication	Time Given
Tylenol	
Motrin	
Opioid	
4th Day after Surgery	
Medication	Time Given
Tylenol	
Motrin	
Opioid	
5th Day after Surgery	
Medication	Time Given
Tylenol	
Motrin	
Opioid	
6th Day after Surgery	
Medication	Time Given
Tylenol	
Motrin	
Opioid	
7th Day after Surgery	
Medication	Time Given
Tylenol	
Motrin	
Opioid	

