

Managing Pain After Surgery

Importance of pain management after surgery

Pain after surgery is commonly experienced at the operative site. The pain causes discomfort and can delay the recovery process, prolonging the hospital stay.

Good pain management is therefore important as it relieves / reduces pain to provide greater comfort, allowing the patient to engage in the following activities, which aid in a faster recovery and earlier discharge:

- Performing deep breathing exercises that help prevent the development of a chest infection and other problems.
- Sitting out of bed and walking.

What should I do before the surgery?

You should understand the nature of your surgery. Being well informed about the type of operation will help reduce anxiety.

Here are some useful questions to ask the doctor or nurse before the surgery:

- Will there be a lot of pain after surgery?
- How long is the pain going to last?
- What are the types of pain relief medication (analgesic) which will be given after surgery?
- What are the side effects of the analgesic?
- How often will the analgesic be given?

What should I do after the surgery?

It is important to know how to manage the pain at this stage.

Here are some tips:

- Ask for the analgesic as soon as you feel slight discomfort as the analgesic takes time to take effect.
- Take the analgesic before the start of any activities such as physiotherapy. It is harder to ease the pain once it has set in.

You can help the doctor or nurse better manage your pain by providing an indication of how much pain you are experiencing using a pain scale.

This allows the doctor or nurse to know a patient's level of comfort and assess if the amount of analgesic administered is sufficient, and adjust the treatment plan accordingly.

Analgesics and methods of administering them

There are different types of analgesics available to control pain after surgery. There are also different methods of administering the analgesics.

Types of analgesics

Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

These drugs reduce swelling and soreness and are used to relieve mild to moderate pain.

Opioids

These drugs relieve moderate to severe pain.

Local Anaesthetics

These drugs are used to relieve severe pain. They are given either near the operative site or through a small tube in your back.

Methods of administering analgesics

Oral (tablet / capsule)

Common oral medicines used are paracetamol, naproxen and tramadol.

Injections

- **Muscle**

The analgesic is injected into the muscle of the upper arm, thigh or buttock. The common medicine used is pethidine, for relief of moderate to severe pain.

- **Vein**

The analgesic is given through a small tube inserted into the vein. Morphine is commonly used, and it is to treat moderate to severe pain.

The analgesic can also be administered continuously with the use of a syringe pump or a patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) pump. If the PCA pump is used, the patient will be able to self-administer the analgesic whenever he needs it.

For more information on PCA, please refer to the PCA brochure.

- **Back (epidural)**

Medicine is given through a small tube inserted into the patient's back after numbing the skin with a local anaesthetic. The tip of the tube is inserted just outside the sack containing the spinal fluid and nerves. Local anaesthetics and opioids can be given through the tube for up to three days after surgery to provide a band of numbness over the operative site.

- **Nerve blocks**

Analgesic is given through a small tube inserted near the operative site. The common medicines used are local anaesthetics. It can be given up to three days after surgery to provide numbness over the operative site.

Other Information

Here are some useful tips on managing mild to moderate pain.

Support the wound site

Coughing, sneezing or other simple essential movements like sitting up or getting out of bed can be painful. Supporting the wound site during these activities will help to reduce the pain.

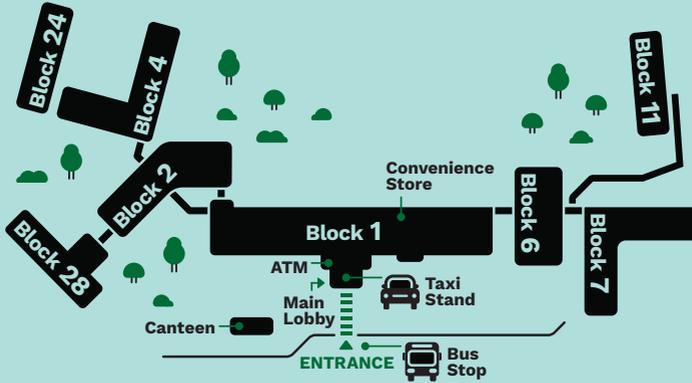
Apply physical agents (cold or hot pack)

Place well-wrapped cold or hot packs on the area where pain is felt. Keep it for about 15 to 20 minutes so that it does not irritate your skin. They are safe to use and have no side effects.

Acute pain service

Our Department of Anaesthesia provides Acute Pain Service to help patients with moderate to severe acute post-operative pain. Our specialists there will be able to discuss with you the best way to manage your post-operative pain when you are admitted for surgery.

How to Get Around Alexandra Hospital



Block 1

Level 1

- Clinic F, Clinical Measurement Centre
- Pharmacy

Level 2

- Clinic J, Integrated Care Clinic | Well Clinic
- Clinic K, Healthy Ageing Clinic | General Surgery Centre

Level 3

- Ward 7

Block 2

Level 1

- Clinic D, Dental Centre
- Clinic E, Orthopaedic Centre | Anaesthesia Outpatient Consultation Clinic

Level 3

- Day Surgery Operating Theatre (DSOT)

Block 4

Level 1

- Ambulatory Surgery Centre
- Endoscopy Centre
- Rehabilitation 1

Level 2

- Wards 2 and 3

Level 3

- Wards 4 and 5
- Intensive Care Unit 2 (ICU 2)

Block 6

Level 1

- Diagnostic Imaging 2 (DI 2)
- 24-HR Urgent Care Centre

Level 2

- Diagnostic Imaging 3 (DI 3)
- Major Operating Theatres 1 and 2 (MOT 1 & 2)

Level 3

- Major Operating Theatres 3 and 4 (MOT 3 & 4)
- Intensive Care Unit 1 (ICU 1)

Block 7

Level 1

- Wards 8 and 9

Level 2

- Wards 10 and 11

Level 3

- Wards 12 and 13

Block 11

Level 1

- Rehabilitation 2

Block 24

Level 1

- Active Health Lab

Block 28

Level 1

- Care and Counselling
- Clinic A, Ear, Nose and Throat Centre (ENT Centre)

Level 2

- Clinic B, Eye Surgery Centre

The information provided in this publication is meant purely for educational purposes and may not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. You should seek the advice of your doctor or a qualified healthcare provider before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical conditions. Information is accurate at time of printing (June 2019) and subject to revision without prior notice.

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