



Why it is so important to reduce the amount of opioid pain medicine you need after surgery

Treating pain with opioids, or narcotics, alone can:

- Make you feel sleepy and confused.
- Lower your blood pressure.
- Slow your breathing.
- Cause nausea, constipation and trouble emptying your bladder.

You may need to stay in the hospital longer and these problems can slow down your recovery.

Our goal is to help you recover with:

- ✓ Less pain.
- ✓ Faster recovery time.
- ✓ Fewer side effects.
- ✓ Return to work and favorite activities sooner and stronger.

Remember these tips to manage pain at home after surgery

- ✓ You will receive instructions to take non-opioid medicine on a regular basis for several weeks. Please take these medicines, as directed, whether you have pain or not. Taking these medicines regularly can help stop your pain from getting worse.
- ✓ If your doctor prescribes gabapentin, take it in the evening. This medicine helps reduce pain and reduce the amount of opioids you will need to take. It may also decrease your chances of developing long-term pain that may last for months or years. Gabapentin may cause sleepiness, slurred speech and blurred vision. If any of these side effects bother you, you may stop taking this medicine.
- ✓ Use the stronger opioid medicine as you need it for pain that does not get better with other treatments.
- ✓ If you have an On-Q pump, follow the instructions you are given until the medicine runs out (usually three days after surgery).



CHRISTIANA CARE
HEALTH SYSTEM

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Managing your pain

Upper Extremity Surgery

(Shoulder, Arm and Hand)



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The best way to control your pain after surgery is to start managing it before surgery.

Before we take you to the operating room, we will give you a combination of non-opioid pain medicines, such as acetaminophen, celecoxib, gabapentin, ibuprofen and/or ketorolac, to take with a sip of water. Taking these medicines before surgery helps:

- Reduce swelling that can lead to pain after surgery.
- Lower the amount of opioid medicines that you need to manage your pain as you get better.
- Lower your chance of ongoing pain that can last months, or even years, after surgery.



Interscalene block

Your anesthesia team may also decide to give you an interscalene nerve block to help reduce the amount of opioid medicines you will need to manage your pain after surgery. Numbing medicine is injected into the neck to surround the nerves that control feeling to your shoulder and block pain signals to your brain.

Depending on the type of medication injected, the block may last anywhere from 12 hours up to several days. Your care team will decide which medication is right for you. You will be given medicine to help you relax before the injection.

How will my pain be managed right after surgery?

You will wake up slowly from anesthesia after your surgery. Most people are groggy for 30 minutes to one hour. As you wake up, you may feel some pain. Be assured that your pain management is a top priority for your Christiana Care team. Your nurses will ask you many times about your pain level and will give you pain medicine as you need it through your intravenous line.

- A scale of 0 to 10 is used to measure pain. A score of 0 means that you do not feel any pain. A score of 10 is the worst pain you have ever felt.

Do not wait for your pain to reach a 10 before telling your doctor or nurse.

You will be given a combination of non-opioid pain medicines, which may include acetaminophen, celecoxib, gabapentin, ibuprofen and/or ketorolac. These medicines help lessen your pain and lower the amount of opioid medicine you need. Your nurse will also give you opioid medicine if you need it for pain that is not getting better with other treatments. Some of the pain medicine will be given through your intravenous line and you will take others by mouth.



On-Q pump

If you are sent home with an On-Q pump, you will be able to adjust the amount of pain medicine you receive using the dial on the pump. It will initially be set for 2 ml per hour infusion. The evening of your surgery, increase it to 8 ml per hour. If you are still feeling pain the next day, you can increase the rate even more, 2 ml at a time. Lower the infusion rate if you feel like your shoulder and arm are too numb. The lower you set the infusion rate, the longer the medicine will run. It typically takes about three days for the ball to empty.

Expect a phone call from our team each day to check on your pain level and answer any questions you may have about the On-Q pump.

You can remove the catheter on your own when the ball shrinks to the size and shape of an apple core. Peel the tape off of your skin and lightly pull the tubing out. It should slide out easily. If there is any difficulty, please call the number on the On-Q pamphlet.