

Post Operative Pain Control Recommendations

There has been a movement in the last few years to try to improve post operative pain control. Narcotics cause a drugged feeling, considerable nausea and are very addictive. Many people have related that often the narcotics make them feel drugged and drowsy but do not control the pain as well as some of the newer nsoids (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs). I still give narcotics for significant post operative pain but encourage patients to try what some consider more effective non-narcotic drugs.

Day of surgery pain medication instructions:

For a procedure expected to be significantly painful take ibuprofen 800 mg upon completion of the surgery or when the arm block is close to wearing off. The ibuprofen 800 mg should be repeated every 8 hours.

Also along with the ibuprofen 800 mg, take either the hydrocodone 5 mg/acetaminophen 325 mg (Norco) or the oxycodone 5 mg / acetaminophen 325 mg (Percocet), whichever has been the narcotic prescribed, when you first feel a twinge of pain. The hydrocodone 5 mg or the oxycodone 5 mg /Acetaminophen 325 mg (Percocet) can be repeated every four hours for severe pain for a day or so until pain is subsiding.

Second day pain medication instructions or instructions for less painful procedures on the day of surgery:

Take ibuprofen 800 mg just after surgery and then every 8 hours until pain subsides.

Also take acetaminophen (Tylenol Arthritis) 650 mg Extended-Release capsules every 8 hours until pain subsides. The acetaminophen 650 mg extended-release capsules (Tylenol Arthritis) are different from Extra Strength Tylenol.

You can stop taking the narcotic medication, ie hydrocodone or oxycodone, as soon as you are convinced that the ibuprofen 800 mg will handle your discomfort. Once you decide to drop the narcotic medication, you can use either ibuprofen 800 mg or acetaminophen 650 mg extended-release capsules. Use the one that you feel works the best for you.

Pain medication is not required for healing so you can stop pain medication as soon as you can handle the discomfort.

Always elevate the hand and elbow above the heart on three pillows for the first 48 hours for sure and even a few more days if the procedure has been extensive and would tend to swell (i.e. distal radius fractures, Dupuytren's release etc.) Elevate so that any fluid in the hand would drain down to the elbow and then down to the shoulder.

Ice in a zip lock bag or ice pack can be used for further comfort for the first 48 hours. Often in hand surgery the bandage is so large like a boxing glove that the coldness can't reach the hand and do much good. It is ok to use though if you feel it provides some comfort.

Antibiotics are given in a onetime IV dose with most surgeries and you will not be given a take home prescription.

Acetaminophen is safe if taken in the recommended dosage on the bottle. It should never be used while consuming alcohol. Acetaminophen is metabolized almost entirely by the liver. Patients with liver disease or have been told not to use acetaminophen should avoid its use. Never take over 4000 mg of acetaminophen – take as little acetaminophen as possible to get the pain relieved.

Ibuprofen is safe if taken as recommended on the bottle. People that have cardiovascular disease, kidney disease or have been told by their primary physician not to take ibuprofen should avoid its use.

Oxycodone is extremely addictive even in recommended doses.

Hydrocodone is addictive as well.