

# Pain Control After Your Surgery

Feel the tension leaving your body.

- Breathe in and out slowly at a speed that is comfortable for you.
- Try “belly (abdominal) breathing”. Push you belly out as you breathe in so that you fill your lungs from the bottom up. If you need help, ask your nurse. Take 4 or 5 deep, slow breaths several times a day.
- As you breathe in, count “one, two, three”, and as you breathe out, count “one, two, three”. You do not need to count out loud, just count silently in your mind.



- As you breathe slowly in and out, try to picture yourself in a place that calms and relaxes you, such as resting on a beach.
- You can do these breathing exercises as often as you like to help you stay calm and relaxed.
- It may help you if you close your eyes.

Remember, you are the most important person on the team that is working to get you well after your surgery. Your doctors and nurses can help you in lots of ways, but **your actions** are the key to getting well.



Department of Anesthesiology  
& Pain Management



## Pain Control After Your Surgery



You and your surgeon have decided that you need surgery. You may have a lot of questions about how much pain you may have after the surgery. Taking care of your pain after surgery is important for 4 reasons.

1. It makes you feel better.
2. It helps you get better faster.
3. It helps keep you from having some of the problems that can come up after surgery.
4. It can help you get back to your usual activities sooner.

Your doctors and nurses have written this booklet to help tell you about ways we can use to help lessen your pain after surgery. We can talk with you about these choices, and help you choose the ways that are best for you.

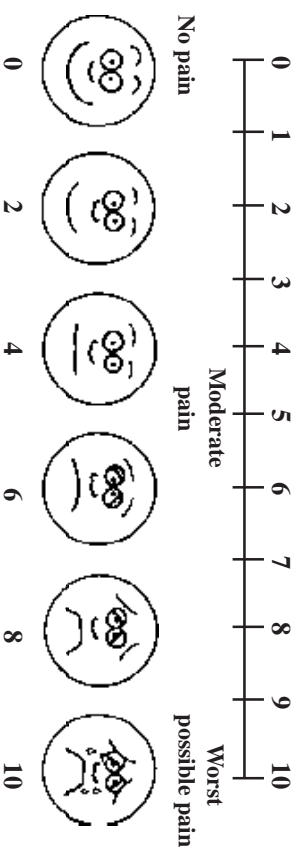
### Ways to lessen pain after surgery:

#### ◆ Continuous Epidural Pain Control

In this way of lessening pain, a thin, soft tube, called a “catheter” is put into your back. Pain medicine flows through the catheter to lessen

- ◆ **Keeping track of how well you are doing:**  
We will have you use the “Pain Scale” to tell us how much pain you have. On this scale, the number 0 means no pain, and the number 10 means the worst pain you could have. When you use this scale, we can tell how well your pain is being taken care of, and we can make changes if we need to. The goal is to treat pain early, before it gets worse.

#### Numbers scale:



#### Face Scale:

- ◆ **Relaxation:** Some breathing exercises that can help you relax can help with your pain after surgery. When you breathe in and out slowly and deeply, your stress and tension lessen, and so does your pain. Here is how to do the breathing exercises:
  - Breathe in slowly and deeply.
  - As you breathe out slowly, feel yourself starting to relax.

## Other ways to help you get better faster:

These are some things you can do to help yourself get better faster:

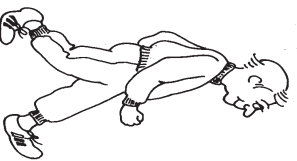
- ◆ **Using the Spirometer:** You will be asked to cough and breathe deeply to keep your lungs clear so you don't get an after-surgery

pneumonia. Put your lips tightly around the mouthpiece, and breathe in deeply and slowly, as if you were sucking on a straw. This will make the ball in the



spirometer rise up. You want to try to get it as high as you can. This checks how deeply you can breathe. It also helps you cough, so you can clear out your lungs. You should do this 10 times each hour while you are awake.

- ◆ **Walking:** Moving around helps you get better faster because it helps keep you from having after-surgery problems such as pneumonia and blood clots. You will be helped to get out of bed and to walk in your room, and then in the hallway as you get better.



pain in the part of your body where the surgery will be done.

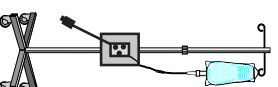
This catheter is usually put into your back just before surgery. The catheter is left in until you can take pills again and begin to eat better, which is usually in 2 - 3 days. Giving pain medicine through the epidural catheter will help you heal faster because:

- Your bowel (gut) gets back to usual faster.
- You can get back to eating sooner.
- You can be up and walking sooner.

Continuous Epidural Pain Control may work best for you if you are having surgery on your chest, abdomen (belly), pelvic (hip) area or legs.

- ◆ **Intravenous (IV) Patient Controlled Pump**

In this way of lessening pain, you get your pain medicine through the IV tube which goes into your vein. **You** are able to control the amount of pain medicine that you get. The pain medicine flows in through an IV tube, controlled by a pump. This pump gives you a set amount of pain medicine when **you** push the button hooked up to it. Nobody should push this button but you. It is set up to keep you from giving yourself too much pain medicine.



If you are still having too much pain, tell your nurse or doctor. Also tell your nurse or doctor if you are feeling too sleepy or nauseated (sick to your stomach).

You will be able to start using your pain pump in the Recovery Room after your surgery.

This way of lessening pain works well for almost any type of surgery.

#### ◆ “As-Needed” Pain Control



In this way of taking care of your after-surgery pain, you will be given pain medicine either through your intravenous (IV) tube, or as a pill or liquid you can swallow. You will need to let your nurse know when you are having pain, and then the nurse will give the pain medicine ordered by your doctor.



Pain is easier to treat before it gets bad, so let your nurse know **right away** when the pain starts. This is important, because it takes a little while for the pain medicine to start working. You should need strong pain medicine only for a short time after your surgery.



As you get better, you will need pain medicine less and less.

#### ◆ Nerve Blocks.

In some types of surgeries, medicine is given to numb just the part of your body where the surgery will be done. Your doctor can do this just before, during or after the surgery. Your doctor will inject this medicine into the main nerves around the part of your body where the surgery will be done. This way of lessening pain usually lasts many hours, sometimes over night. It takes care of the worst pain which is right after the surgery. Later, when the pain is not so bad, you can change to pain pills.

Nerve blocks may be a good choice if you are having surgery on your shoulder, arm, leg or foot.

We want you to be as comfortable as possible after your surgery. We may not be able to take away all of your pain, but you should be comfortable enough to move, breathe and take care of yourself.

