

Anaesthetic and Pain Management department

Managing Pain after your Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy Surgery

This leaflet explains about pain relief after surgery. There are many effective treatments to help keep you comfortable after your operation. The different ways of relieving pain will be explained before your operation by the doctors and nurses looking after you. The most suitable one for you and your type of surgery will be provided.

What is pain and how can it be measured?

Pain is an unpleasant sensation that people can experience after surgery and as well as taking regular pain killers to manage the pain, you will be asked to tell the doctors and nurses about any pain that you have. They will ask you about the severity of the pain at rest and on movement, such as deep breathing, coughing or sitting out of bed.

We ask patients to score their pain with a number on a 0 – 3 scale.

- 0 = no pain
- 1 = mild pain
- 2 = moderate pain
- 3 = severe pain



Patient Information

Why do we treat pain?

Good pain relief is very important and has many benefits, for example:

- Greater comfort while you recover from surgery.
- Quicker recovery as breathing exercises and moving about can all be managed with less discomfort.
- Reduces the complications of surgery such as chest infections and blood clots.

How will my pain be treated?

There are many different ways to control pain and sometimes combinations of treatments are used to get the best results. Your pain relief will be assessed at regular intervals and adjustments to the treatment can be made if required. We aim for patients to be able to cough, breathe deeply, and move around without experiencing significant discomfort.

It is much easier to relieve pain before it gets too severe, therefore, you should continue to take your medication regularly.

The available methods of pain relief are: tablets, liquids and suppositories. Suppositories are soft pain killing tablets which are inserted into your back passage.

Tablets, liquids and suppositories

If you are able to eat and drink, the most convenient way to take painkillers is by mouth.

We know that combinations of different types of analgesics (painkillers) provide the best pain relief.

If you find swallowing tablets difficult you need to tell the nurses and doctors looking after you, as soluble or liquid forms are available. Some patients may be offered the use of pain killers in the form of suppositories.

Paracetamol is prescribed for nearly all patients to take regularly after surgery as research has shown that it can improve the effectiveness of other

Patient Information

painkillers. Smaller doses of stronger painkillers can then be used with reduced side effects.

You will be given some painkillers to take home with you.

Patients sometimes worry about becoming addicted to strong pain killing medicines but when used to treat pain after surgery they do not cause addiction.

Some of the painkillers that we use have side effects that can be easily treated, such as nausea, vomiting and constipation.

Nausea and vomiting can be treated with anti emetics (anti sickness medicine).

The nurses or doctors will ask you about the severity of the nausea and vomiting. We ask you to use a scale of 0-3.

- 0 = no nausea
- 1 = mild nausea
- 2 = moderate nausea and vomiting
- 3 = severe nausea and vomiting

Constipation can be helped by eating a balanced healthy diet with high fibre (fruit, vegetables, wholemeal bread) and drinking plenty of fluids. If you continue to suffer from constipation it can be treated with laxatives.

You will be able to discuss these and any other concerns with your anaesthetist before surgery.

Painkillers to take at home

When you are ready to be discharged from hospital, the ward doctors will write a prescription for painkillers along with other medicines that they want you to continue to use at home.

You should take the painkillers as prescribed and at the prescribed intervals. If you are not sure about how or when to take painkillers please ask the ward nurses before you are discharged.

Patient Information

Pain following surgery should reduce over time and you should continue to take the painkillers until normal day to day activities are comfortable. The pain killers are not intended for long term use and you can reduce your painkillers as you feel your pain levels reduce.

Once you have been discharged from hospital, if you have any problems with pain, you should contact your GP.

The Pain Service

At the University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust we aim to provide the safest and best pain relief for all patients after surgery. To achieve this we have an acute pain service provided by a team of specialist nurses. The team is available on weekdays to advise and answer any questions that you may have about pain relief. If you would like to speak to one of the team you can ask the ward nurses to contact us. Alternatively, the Pain Management Secretaries can be contacted on 024 7696 5878.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the Pain Management Secretaries on 024 7696 5878 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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