

Better recovery with MAWDS

MAWDS is a simple formula that can help you recover better after your procedure. MAWDS stands for Medications, Activity, Wound care, Diet, and Symptoms.



Medications. Your medication works to improve your health.

Medications can include prescription pills, injections (shots), patches, inhalers, vitamin supplements, and over-the-counter drugs (like Tylenol or cough syrup). If you were taking regular medications before your surgery, you can start taking them again when you go home, or when your doctor says it's safe to do so.

Pain management

After your surgery, you are likely to be prescribed an opioid (narcotic) pain medication to help you manage your pain. The goal of pain management is to reduce your pain enough that your body and mind can focus on healing — not take your pain away completely. Your pain management plan will help you:

- **Move around more easily.** This will help you get your strength back faster.
- **Have fewer complications.** As you are able to do more therapy exercises, you reduce your chances of having complications such as pneumonia and blood clots.

Opioids are powerful medications and can be harmful to you or others if not used exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Your prescription will only be for the amount generally needed for the type of surgery you have had. You may be given a second prescription for additional tablets/doses if you need them. **Fill this second prescription ONLY if your pain is not managed in other ways.** If you do not fill the second prescription, please destroy it so others cannot misuse it.

Birth control pills and implants may not work well after your procedure. This is because of the way they mix with anesthesia (pain medications) used during your procedure. It is best to use a back-up birth control method for **28 days** after your procedure to prevent pregnancy.

To stay safe when taking opioid pain medication:

- Take them only if you need them. If you do, take them exactly as your doctor tells you to. If you are unsure about what and how much you should take, call your doctor's office.
- Always take them with food.
- Never drink alcohol or use street drugs while taking pain medications. Avoid smoking, tobacco and e-cigarettes as they can hamper wound healing.
- Do not drive when taking pain medications.
- Be extra careful when walking, using crutches, or climbing stairs. Pain medications may make you dizzy or sleepy.
- Never share opioid pain medications with anyone else, even if they have pain. Opioids act differently in each person. If someone takes your medication and they have a reaction, they could die.
- If you don't think you will use very much — or any — of your pain medication, ask your doctor to prescribe a smaller number of doses. You can also ask the pharmacist to give you only part of the prescription.
- Lock up your prescription medications, especially opioids, where they are safe. Don't leave them where anyone who is visiting can find them. If your pain medication is lost or stolen, you may not be able to get another prescription.

Medication facts

Use and examples	Purpose	Side effects	Serious side effects (call your prescribing provider)	
Pain relief				
Acetaminophen (Tylenol)	Relieves mild pain and fever	Rash (side effects are rare)	Serious side effects are rare	Only take when needed for pain as directed by your doctor.
Anti-inflammatories Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) Naproxen (Aleve)	Relieves mild-to-moderate pain and reduces swelling	Upset stomach, heartburn, or gas, constipation, or diarrhea, dizziness	Rash, itching, and/or hives, swelling of the face, lips, or tongue, difficulty breathing, severe stomach pain	Only take when needed for pain as directed by your doctor.
Opioids Tramadol (Ultram) Hydrocodone + acetaminophen (Norco or Lortab) Oxycodone + acetaminophen (Percocet) Hydromorphone (Dilaudid)	Relieves moderate-to-severe pain Do not take additional acetaminophen (Tylenol)	Dizziness, drowsiness, nausea, and/or vomiting, constipation	Difficulty breathing or extreme sleepiness Rash, itching, and/or hives, swelling of the face, lips, or tongue	Only take when needed for pain as directed by your doctor. Safely dispose of any leftover pills.
Nausea and/or vomiting				
Promethazine (Phenergan) Ondansetron (Zofran) Scopolamine patch (Transderm Scop)	Relieves nausea and vomiting	Headache, drowsiness, dizziness, confusion, dry eyes and/or dry mouth	Excessive drowsiness Rash, itching	Only take when needed for nausea and vomiting as directed by your doctor.
Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)	Relieves itching Can relieve nausea	Drowsiness, dizziness, dry eyes and/or dry mouth	Inability to urinate (pee)	Only take when prescribed for nausea and vomiting.
Itching				
Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)	Relieves itching Can relieve nausea	Drowsiness, dizziness, dry eyes and/or dry mouth	Inability to urinate	Only take when prescribed for nausea and vomiting
Infection (antibiotics)				
Cephalexin (Keflex) Ciprofloxacin (Cipro) Clindamycin (Cleocin)	Prevents and/or treats bacterial infections	Diarrhea, nausea and/or upset stomach, headache, metallic taste in mouth	Rash, itching, and/or hives, swelling of the face, lips, or tongue, difficulty breathing, severe diarrhea	Complete prescription as directed by your doctor.
Opioid reversal				
Naloxone (Narcan)	Treats/reverses opioid overdose	Agitation, confusion	Serious side effects are rare	Call 911. Follow the directions that come with your naloxone kit
Other				
Muscle relaxants	Relieves pain, treats muscle spasms	Sleepiness, confusion, dizziness, memory loss	Difficulty breathing or extreme sleepiness Rash, itching, and/or hives, swelling of the face, lips, or tongue	Do not take if taking opioid medications.
Gabapentin (Neurontin)	Relieves pain	Sleepiness, dry mouth, nausea	Depression, low mood, panic attacks, nervousness	Take with food if it causes upset stomach. Do not crush or chew.

Managing pain without opioids

Non-opioid medication options include ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), acetaminophen (Tylenol), and naproxen (Aleve). Other non-opioid prescription medications might include muscle relaxants and nerve pain medications.

Ask your healthcare provider how to use these pain medications safely. Most surgical pain is rarely severe (painful enough you are unable to function) for longer than 3 to 4 days.

Avoiding constipation

The most common side effect of opioid medication is constipation (can't poop). To avoid constipation:

- Stand and walk at least every 2 hours if you are able.
- Drink at least 60 ounces (2,000 milliliters) of fluid every day.
- Try to take fewer opioids each day. Use other non-opioid pain relievers to manage your pain instead.
- Use a stool softener daily to prevent constipation.
- Use a mild laxative, such as Miralax or senna, if you start to get constipated.

Continue with these instructions until you are finished with your opioid medication, you are having regular bowel movements without treatment, or you get diarrhea.



Activity

Regular physical activity strengthens your body and lifts your spirits.

You must have a responsible adult family member or friend to help care for you for the first 24 hours (1 day and night) after you go home.

Do not:

- Exercise until your doctor says it is okay.
- Attempt any activities that require alertness, balance, coordination, or judgment for the first 24 hours after surgery.
- Drive or operate equipment for at least 24 hours after you go home.
- Make important decisions or sign legal papers for at least 24 hours after you go home.

Do:

- Put an ice pack on your surgery site as instructed by your doctor. If you had surgery on an arm or leg, put pillows under it to raise it above your heart.
- Bathe and shower only as directed by your provider.
- Keep a close eye on children during the ride home from the hospital. Make sure they are breathing freely. Children and adults should always ride with the proper restraints. Children should always ride in a child safety seat and in the back seat, if possible.

Managing pain without medication

You may be able to take fewer doses of pain medication (or skip it completely with your healthcare provider's okay) when you use one of these ways to relieve pain. Ask your healthcare provider which ones might work best for you.

- Cold or heat
- Guided imagery and music
- Physical therapy or exercise
- Relaxation or meditation
- Massage and/or acupressure
- Spiritual or emotional counseling
- Aromatherapy





Wound care Washing hands is the best way to prevent infection.

Wash your hands before and after you touch your wound or bandage. Keep your bandage clean and dry and change or take off your bandage only when your doctor says it's okay.

A small amount of bloody drainage is normal. If you have a large amount of bright red bleeding, call your doctor or go to the emergency room.



Diet. What you eat and drink can affect your health.

Drink lots of water, juice, or other non-caffeinated drinks to help your body heal. Do not drink alcohol of any kind until your doctor says it is okay.

You can have light foods, such as Jell-O, soup, toast, applesauce, eggs, or yogurt. Start to eat small amounts of other foods after a few hours if you don't feel sick to your stomach. Go back to light foods if you feel sick to your stomach or vomit.

If constipated, add high-fiber foods to your diet, such as beans, peas, nuts, prunes, whole grains, and high-fiber cereals.



Symptoms. Catching symptoms early can prevent complications or an emergency.

Call 911 if:

- You have chest pain or heaviness in the chest.
- You can't catch your breath or have a hard time breathing.
- Your face is drooping or you have weakness in your arm or changes in your speech.
- The person caring for you can't wake you up. (This person should check on you every 1 to 2 hours during the first 24 hours. You may be tired or sleepy but should easily wake up.)

If you get one, please answer our email survey about your pain medication use after surgery. This information helps us help all patients. Safely dispose of any leftover opioids. Find a location at [knowyourscript.org](https://www.knowyourscript.org).

Call your doctor if:

- You have difficulty staying awake or it is difficult to wake up.
- The arm or leg that was operated on turns blue, feels cold to the touch, is numb or tingles, and you did not have a nerve block.
- Your pain gets worse or it does not get any better.
- You think you're having a reaction to the medication.
- You have signs of infection, including increased pain, unusual drainage, redness or swelling, foul odor, or a fever over 101°F (38.8°C).
- You are unable to urinate (pee) 12 hours after surgery.
- You continue to feel sick to your stomach, you are throwing up, and you can't keep liquids down or have signs of dehydration (dry mouth, very little urine that is dark colored, and no tears).

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