

Let's Talk About...

Better Recovery with MAWDS

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



Medications

Medications work to improve your child's health.

Medications can include prescription pills, injections (shots), patches, inhalers, vitamin supplements, and over-the-counter drugs (like Tylenol or cough syrup). If your child is taking regular medications before their procedure or surgery, they should be able to start taking them again when they go home or when the doctor says it's safe to do so. Make sure to your child's doctor knows about everything your child is taking. Some medications, vitamins, and herbs can increase drowsiness and other symptoms when combined.

Pain management

After surgery, your child may be prescribed an opioid (narcotic) pain medication to help manage pain.

The goal of pain management isn't to take away the pain completely but to reduce pain enough that their body and mind can focus on healing. Managing your child's pain will help them:

- **Move around more easily.** This will help your child get their strength back more quickly.
- **Have fewer complications.** As your child is able to do more therapy exercises, their chances of complications are reduced.

Opioids are powerful medications and can be harmful to your child, if not used exactly as prescribed by the doctor. The prescription will only be for the amount generally needed to recover from the type of surgery your child has had.

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 7 days after your procedure to prevent pregnancy.

To keep your child safe when giving opioids:

- Give opioids exactly as prescribed. If you are unsure about what and how much you should give your child, call the doctor's office.
- Always give them with food.
- Make sure your child takes extra care when walking, using crutches, or climbing stairs. Pain medications may make your child dizzy or sleepy.
- Never share your child's opioid pain medications with anyone else, even if they have pain. Opioids act differently in each person. If someone takes your child's medication and they have a reaction, they could die.
- Lock up prescription medications, especially opioids, where they are safe. Don't leave them where anyone who is visiting can find them. If pain medication is lost or stolen, you may not be able to get another prescription.
- Keep the medication in the bottle it came in. The label on the bottle has instructions and information you need.

Medication facts				
Use and examples	Purpose	Side effects	Serious side effects (Call your prescribing provider)	How to take
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)	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, and/or tongue	Only take when needed for pain as directed by your doctor. Safely dispose of any unused 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 and 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 and can relieve nausea	Drowsiness, dizziness, dry eyes and/or dry mouth	Inability to urinate	Only take when needed for itching as directed by your doctor.
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 muscles 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 chew or crush.

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 child's healthcare provider how to use these pain medications safely. Most surgical pain is rarely painful enough that your child can't 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, have your child:

- Stand and walk at least every 2 hours if they are able.
- Drink enough fluid every day.
- Try to give fewer opioids each day. Use other non-opioid pain relievers to manage your child's pain instead.

Ask your child's doctor if a mild laxative, such as Miralax or senna, is appropriate for your child.



Activity

Regular physical activity strengthens your child's body and lifts their spirit.

Your child must have a responsible parent or adult family member care for them for the first 24 hours (1 day and night) after they go home.

Do:

- Put an ice pack on your child's surgery site as instructed by the doctor. If they had surgery on an arm or leg, put pillows under it to raise it above their heart.
- Bathe them only as directed by the provider.
- Keep a close eye on your child during the ride home from the hospital. Make sure they are breathing freely. Children and adults should always ride with the proper restraints. Use a child safety seat in the back seat.
- Make sure your child is in a position so that they have an open airway for easy breathing.

Managing pain without medication

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

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



- For children under the age of 4, we strongly recommend that 2 adults take your child home. One to drive and one to sit with your child in the back seat and watch them for any breathing problems.

Do not let your child:

- Exercise until your doctor says it's okay.
- Attempt any activities that require alertness, balance, coordination, or judgment for the first 24 hours after surgery.
- Go back to school without the doctor's okay.



Wound care

Washing hands is the best way to prevent infection.

Keep your child's bandage clean and dry and change or take off the bandage only when the doctor says it's okay. A small amount of bloody drainage is normal. If you see a large amount of bright red bleeding, call the doctor or go to the emergency room.



Diet

What you eat and drink can affect your health.

Your child needs to drink lots of water, juice, or other non-caffeinated drinks to help their body heal. Some signs of dehydration include dark yellow urine, dry mouth (no spit), chapped lips, or when the soft spot on a baby's head sinks inwards. If your child is under 2 years old, give water, apple juice or Pedialyte. Older children can have ice pops, Gatorade, gelatin, decaffeinated Coke, or 7Up.

Your child can have light foods, such as Jell-O, soup, toast, applesauce, eggs, or yogurt. Offer your child small amounts of other foods after a few hours if they don't feel sick to their stomach. Go back to light foods if they feel sick to their stomach or are vomiting.

If constipated, add high-fiber foods to their 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:

- Your child can't catch their breath or they have a hard time breathing.
- Your child can't wake up. (Check on them every 1 to 2 hours during the first 24 hours. They may be tired or sleepy but should easily wake up.)
- You cannot wake up your child.

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:

useonlyasdirected.org/throw-out

Call your doctor if:

- Your child has difficulty staying awake or they are difficult to wake up.
- The arm or leg that was operated on turns blue, feels cold to the touch, is numb or tingles, and your child did not have a nerve block.
- Their pain gets worse or it does not get any better.
- You think they're having a reaction to the medication.
- They have signs of infection, including increased pain, unusual drainage, redness or swelling, foul odor, or a fever over 101°F (38.8°C).
- They are unable to urinate (pee) 12 hours after surgery.
- They continue to feel sick to their stomach, they are throwing up, they 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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