

## INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

# Pain Relief after your Operation



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## Introduction

Please read the following information leaflet carefully as it will help to explain about how we will treat any pain you may have after your operation.

Please feel free to ask your doctors and nurses about anything that is unclear, or if you have any unanswered questions about your care.

There is a pain management team within the hospital that visits most wards regularly. If you would like to discuss anything related to this booklet or feel you would like to speak to them before or after your operation please ask the staff to arrange this for you.

The experience of pain after an operation is very different for everyone and only you know how much it hurts; so do not be afraid of being honest about the amount of pain you are feeling.

Pain is much easier to control if you keep on top of it by taking pain killers regularly, rather than trying to cope and letting it build up.

Good pain relief should help you to recover from your operation quicker and get home sooner.

When you wake up after your operation you will be asked if you are comfortable. The nurses will ask you if you have pain or to describe what your “pain score” is, using the scale opposite.

A pain scale should be available on your ward, if it is not please ask the ward staff. If you have any pain at any time please let the staff know what your pain score is so that they can give you some painkillers.

## ACUTE PAIN INTENSITY SCORE

### ASSESS PAIN INTENSITY ON MOVEMENT

<b>0</b>	<b>No Pain</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Mild Pain</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Moderate Pain</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Severe Pain</b>

Not all painkillers suit everyone, or you may need extra pain killers so let the nurses/doctors know if your painkillers are not working so that they can give you an alternative.

There are a variety of different options available for managing your pain and the doctor/nurse will discuss with you the option that will suit you best. The most commonly used methods are....

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## **1: Tablets**

Depending on the type of surgery and the severity of your pain it may be possible to control it with tablets. Once you are able to start eating and drinking following your operation you will be able to take the painkilling tablets. These come in different strengths and need to be given at different times. The nursing staff will advise you on how often you should take your tablets. Although the nurse will offer you regular tablets, do not be afraid of asking for more if you still have pain. If you have problems swallowing tablets let the nursing staff know and they may be able to give them to you as a liquid instead.

## **2: Suppositories**

These waxy pellets are placed in your back passage (*rectum*) but are not a laxative and will not make you go to the toilet. As the suppository dissolves the painkilling drug passes easily into your body. This type of painkiller is often used if you are not able to eat or drink, if you can't swallow or if you are feeling sick. Suppositories are often used alongside other types of painkillers such as patient control analgesia or epidurals.

## **3: Injections**

Intramuscular injections (*IM*) can be given into the muscle in either your buttock or your thigh, the nurse

## **4: Patient Controlled Analgesia**

Patient controlled analgesia or PCA allows you to have some control over the amount of painkiller you receive. The PCA consists of an infusion pump (*machine*) which is activated by a hand held button. When you press the button a small dose of painkilling drug is given to you through your intravenous drip. In this way you control the amount of painkiller that you receive. The system is very safe and you cannot overdose yourself. The nurse will show you how to use this pump and a more detailed information sheet is available if you need it.

## **5: Regional Anaesthetic**

Having a regional anaesthetic means having an injection of local anaesthetic that will numb an area of your body. You might still be able to feel touch and movement but you will not feel pain. A more detailed information sheet is available if you need it.

## **6: Epidural Analgesia**

An epidural may be used following some types of surgery. This is the same method that many ladies receive during childbirth. A very fine tube is placed, either before or during your operation, into the epidural space in your back (*the epidural space is the area around your spine where the nerve endings are*). Pain killing drugs are then given through this tube providing you with pain relief. The anaesthetist and the nurses will discuss this method with you and a more detailed information sheet is available if you need it.

Following your operation you may be given more than one of these pain killers at the same time. This will help you to stay comfortable and reduces the chance of you suffering from any ill effects.

Sometimes pain killers can make you feel sick. If this does happen to you, please let the nurse know. You can have anti-sickness drugs to control this so that you DO NOT have to stop taking your painkillers.

There are many other things that you can do to help keep yourself comfortable after you operation. Some of these are:

- Regularly changing your position in bed as well as getting up and moving around as much as possible.
- Using a pillow to support your wound when you need to cough or move.
- Once able, a warm bath or the use of a heat pad may also help.

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- Relaxation; this may be difficult to do but the nurses can advise you on some simple techniques which you may find helpful.

The nurses will discuss all of these methods with you and will offer you advice throughout your stay and when you are ready to go home.

We would welcome any comments or suggestions you may have about how your pain was managed whilst you were in hospital and once you were discharged home.

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Ward/Hospital (*optional*) .....

Please return to:  
Acute Pain Team  
c/o Department of Anaesthetics  
Leeds General Infirmary  
Great George Street,  
LEEDS  
LS1 3EX

