Pain Management
Before and Through Surgery

Most people have some pain after surgery. Good pain control helps you feel comfortable, so you can take deep breaths, walk, and sleep. These things help to lower your risk of problems, such as pneumonia and blood clots after surgery.

Take your medicine as ordered by your doctor to bring your the most relief as your body heals.

Starting before surgery
Your doctor may order medicine to help control your pain before surgery. These may include:

- Acetaminophen, brand name Tylenol
- Oxycodone, brand names Oxycontin, Oxecta, or Roxicodone
- Gabapentin, brand names Neurotin, Gralise, or Horizant
- Celecoxib, brand name Celebrex

Other medicines may be ordered to control anxiety or to prevent nausea.

Pain relief procedures
Besides oral medicines, your surgeon or anesthesiologist may recommend spinal or epidural analgesia for your surgery to control pain.

Spinal Analgesia
- Can also help to control pain after surgery. After cleaning and numbing the skin, a needle is put into the spinal space below the spinal cord. (It does not go into your spinal cord.) When the needle is in the right place, you will be given an injection of pain medicine and then the needle is removed.
- Rare side effects may include: headaches, numbness or tingling in lower legs, back soreness, bleeding, allergic reaction, or infection.

Epidural Analgesia
- Also gives pain relief after surgery. A very thin flexible tube, called an epidural catheter, is placed in the epidural space in your back just before surgery. A small pump is attached to the catheter to deliver numbing medicine. The catheter is taped to your back. You will be able to move around in bed and walk. This can be left in place for 24 to 48 hours before you leave the hospital.
- Rare side effects may include: headaches, bleeding, allergic reaction, or infection.
Other pain relief options

If the other pain control procedures are not best for you, there are other options to provide pain relief after surgery.

Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)

- This is a special pump that connects to your intravenous (IV) line. When you feel pain, you push a button to get a measured dose of pain medicine. Your doctor orders the kind and amount of pain medicine to meet your needs.
- The pump limits how much pain medicine you can receive, so you cannot give yourself too much medicine. This is safe and puts you in control of your pain relief.
- You should be the only person to push the button, not your family members or friends. Your nurse will give you more instructions about the use of your pump.

Non-Drug Pain Control

Many patients find using other treatments helps to reduce the need for pain medicines. Some of these options may include:

- **Activity:** Start moving as soon as possible after surgery if your doctor says it is okay. Moving helps your breathing and digestion, and helps you heal faster. Moving and being active can help lessen pain over time.
- **Cold and heat:** Both cold and heat can help lessen some types of pain. Some pain improves best using cold while other types of pain improve with moist heat. Talk to your nurse about, which is best for your type of pain.
- **Deep breathing:** Taking slow deep breaths can help you relax and lessen pain.
- **Distraction:** Focus your attention on something other than pain. Playing cards or games and talking and visiting with family may relax you and keep you from thinking about the pain. Watching TV or reading may also be helpful.
- **Music:** Whether you listen to music, sing, hum, or play an instrument, music can help you relax and help you breathe more deeply and slowly. It can also increase your energy and help change your mood.
- **Relaxation techniques:** Stress and anxiety can make pain worse and may slow healing. Since it is hard to avoid stress, it can help to learn how to control it. Some ways to help you relax:
  - Use extra pillows and blankets to stay in a comfortable position.
  - Make sure the room is the right temperature for you.
  - Ask your support person to massage your back, hands, or feet to lessen your pain.
  - Try placing a cool cloth on your hands or face.
  - Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a place you find relaxing. Think about sounds or sights that you enjoy.