

How Do I Report Pain To My Nurse or Doctor?

Be honest about the pain you are feeling – tell your doctor and nurses how much it hurts, where it hurts, and what activities or positions seem to make it better or worse. There are several ways you can report your pain to your doctor and nurses:

- **0-to-10 scale:** your nurses will often ask you to give your pain a number from 0 to 10. A “0” rating means that you have no pain, and a “10” rating means you are having the worst pain you have ever had or can imagine. By giving your pain a number, you are helping the nurses to know how well your pain is being managed.
- **Word scale:** you can choose a word to describe your pain from five word choices. These are “none,” “mild,” “moderate,” “severe,” and “excruciating (worst pain you can imagine).”
- **FACES scale:** these are the faces pictured on the front of this brochure. Anyone can use this scale – each face shows a person who is happy because they are not hurting, or sad because they are either hurting a little or hurting a lot.
- **FLACC scale:** this is the scale that your nurses will use to help them know how much pain you are in if you can’t tell them about your pain. This scale is used a lot with children, or with any patients who are not able to talk or describe their pain.

One More Thing!

When your pain is under control, your body can focus on the important work of healing. This is not the best time to test your pain tolerance or “grin and bear it.” Work with your health care team to make your recovery as prompt and comfortable as possible.



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Patient’s Guide To Pain Management

Kootenai Outpatient Surgery



Your comfort is important to us!

Phone: 208.625.6400

Managing Your Surgical Pain As A Team

What do I need to do *before and after* surgery to help my doctor and nurses manage my pain?

- When you are talking to your doctor before surgery and to your nurse in the pre-op area, tell them about any experiences you have had with pain before, such as what worked for you, and what did not.
- Tell them if you have any chronic pain, if you take any pain medicine regularly or if you wear pain medication patches, and if you use any drugs or alcohol (or have used them in the past).
- You should also tell them about any allergies you have to medications, or adverse reactions they may cause, such as nausea or vomiting.
- After surgery, take your pain medicine as soon as you need it. Make sure you take it the way it is prescribed by your doctor. Don't let it get out-of-control and call your doctor if it becomes unbearable.

How will my pain be managed when I am hurting after my surgery?

- It is normal to experience some pain after surgery, but it should not be severe. There are many different ways your doctor and nurses will manage your pain after surgery. They will also make sure you know how to manage your pain when you go home.

- **Intravenous ("IV") medicine:** before surgery, you will probably have a small plastic tube placed in a vein in your hand or arm. The nurses and doctor will use this to give you fluids and medicines for pain or nausea. This will stay in place until you go home to allow the nurses to give you pain medicines after your surgery.
- **Nerve block:** if you are having surgery on a smaller area, like a shoulder, hand, or leg, the doctor may order this type of pain management. Local anesthetic is injected to help "numb" the area where you are having surgery. This can also help decrease how much pain medicine you may need after surgery.
- **Oral pain medicine:** your doctor may order oral pain medicine or anti-inflammatories (like Ibuprofen) for you to take at home to manage your pain. If so, your nurse will likely start giving these to you while you are in the recovery room if you are having pain after surgery. Starting these before you go home will help to keep your pain at a more manageable level.
- Your anesthesia provider will speak with you before your surgery about possible anesthesia options. He/she will select the option that best fits with the procedure you are having and your personal health status.

Other ways to manage pain in the hospital and at home:

- If your doctor orders it, your nurses may have you apply ice to your surgery site.
- If you have surgery to an arm, leg, face, or head, elevating those areas may help manage pain.
- "Splinting" your stomach or groin if you have surgery near those areas is good practice – this means holding gentle pressure over the area when you get up, cough, or sneeze.
- Be sure to rest often.
- Your nurses will give you specific suggestions depending on what kind of surgery you have

Don't ignore side effects of your pain medicine:

- While you are in the hospital, the nurses must make sure that you don't have too much pain medicine in your system while they are managing your pain. Too much pain medicine can make you very sleepy, or cause you to breathe slower and not as deep. Your nurses are trained to help you be comfortable while also making sure you are safe.
- **At home, if you experience extreme sleepiness, do not take any more medicine for pain until you call your doctor.**
- Other side effects to report to your doctor are constipation, nausea, or itching. Your pharmacy will give you an information sheet about the specific medicines your doctor has prescribed for you.