



**EASTERN SUBURBS  
SURGICAL SPECIALISTS**

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## **Pain Relief**

**What is Pain?** – Pain is the unpleasant sensation caused by illness or injury. It is how your brain interprets the signals from your body. It is easier to prevent pain than treat it when it occurs.

**How much pain will I feel after my surgery?** – The amount of pain you will have, and how long it will last, depends partly on what kind of operation you are having. How you feel after surgery also depends on your age, health, and other medical problems.

**How is pain prevented?** – Doctors use different medications to make sure you do not feel any pain during your surgery. This is called an anaesthetic and can be general (full asleep), regional (large area of body is made numb) e.g., epidural, or local anaesthetic where small areas of the body are made numb. For some operations, a combination of methods is used.

During surgery, doctors can do different things to help control the pain you might have later.

- An injection of numbing medicine near where the surgeon is operating. This can help reduce pain around your incision (the cut in your skin).
- A Nerve Block – An injection is given near certain nerves. This stops the pain signals the nerves normally send, so you don't feel as much pain in that area. This can last for several hours after surgery. Sometimes the medicine is given through a catheter (small tube) that stays in place during surgery and afterwards.
- Pain Medications given through an IV drip. An IV is a thin tube that goes into a vein. There are different kinds of pain medications that can be given through an IV.
- Pain medicine given with spinal anaesthesia – For some operations, you might need spinal anaesthesia. A doctor will put a small needle in your lower back. The medicine will be injected to numb the nerves in your spine. Pain medicine can also be given this way.
- Medicines can also be given through an epidural. This is a small tube (catheter) that goes into your back, near the nerves of your spine. The tube stays in during surgery. It can also be left in after surgery, to help with pain whilst you are in surgery. Doctors can use it to give both numbing medicines and pain medicines.

**How is pain treated after surgery?** – Following your operation, you will receive regular pain killers (whether you have pain or not) to prevent severe pain. If you can swallow and absorb tablets this is the best option. Tablets can be slow release to produce pain relief over several hours, whereas injections do not last so long. Injectable pain relief is usually delivered via a drip in your arm.

**Type of Painkillers – Paracetamol (Panadol) –** A common drug most people use at home. In hospital, Panadol is given before the onset of pain and works very well to stop pain starting or to greatly reduce the number of other painkillers required. Please take at suggested doses. Panadol is very safe and reduces fevers.

Non-steroidal (Brufen, Neurofen, Advil, diclofenac, Mobil, etc) – these medications treat pain, reduce fever and treat inflammation. They can be taken in combination with Panadol in the form of a tablet. They are usually used for short periods of time as some can cause some impairment of wound healing and ulcers. They CANNOT be used by people with kidney problems or asthma.

Opioids (morphine, endone, oxycontin, panadeine, targin, etc) – Some of the strongest pain killing drugs, that work very well. They have a few side effects including drowsiness, constipation, and dependence. Ideally, they should only be used for short periods of time during your recovery.

**How long will I have pain?** – It depends. After a minor operation, you might feel fine a few hours afterwards. After major surgery, you might need pain medication for days or even weeks. Your doctor or nurse will work with you to make sure your pain is treated properly.

**What will happen after I go home from the hospital?** – Your doctor will tell you what kind of pain to expect after your surgery. A prescription for pain medications to take after you go home will be prescribed and can be renewed with your GP.

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