

How do I manage my child's pain after surgery?

Unless directed otherwise by your child's doctor, for pain control during the first 48 hours after surgery, use over-the-counter pain medications such as **acetaminophen** (brand name Tylenol®) around-the-clock, even if your child is not in pain. **Around-the-clock** means your child will take the medication on a set schedule rather than taking them as needed

What over-the-counter medications will my child be taking?

Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and **ibuprofen** (Motrin® or Advil®) are available over the counter and do not need a prescription, they can be purchased at the store (before or after surgery). The dose is determined by your child's weight. A syringe/dropper should be used to measure all liquid medication. Please do not use a spoon. **These are very effective pain medications that help with inflammation after surgery and are an important aspect of pain relief.**

Do not give ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil®) to children under 6 months of age.

Do not give if your doctor has specifically told you not to.

- Follow the dosing instructions in your discharge instructions based on your child's weight. Talk to your medical provider about the maximum dose before ever administering higher or more frequent doses than recommended.
- **For children age 6 months or younger:** Give acetaminophen (Tylenol) every 6 hours while your child is awake.
- **For children older than 6 months of age:** Alternate taking acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) every 3 hours while your child is awake. Each medicine should be given every 6 hours, but alternated so that

one medicine is given every 3 hours while your child is awake (see instructions below).

How do I alternate over-the-counter pain medication?

You will give your child a dose of pain medication every three hours.

- Start with a dose of acetaminophen
- 3 hours later give a dose of ibuprofen
- 3 hours after taking the ibuprofen give another dose of acetaminophen (This will be 6 hours after the last dose of acetaminophen)
- 3 hours after give a dose of ibuprofen (This will be 6 hours after the last dose of ibuprofen)

For example, if the first dose of Tylenol is given at 12:00pm this would be your child's schedule for the day:

12:00 PM	Tylenol dose
3:00 PM	Ibuprofen dose
6:00 PM	Tylenol dose
9:00 PM	Ibuprofen dose
Continue alternating every 3 hours	

What are opioid medications?

Opioids are strong medications that provide good pain relief, but may cause harm. Examples of opioids that may be prescribed to your child are:

Oxycodone, Norco, Hycet, Vicodin, and Percocet. These medications require a prescription from your doctor.

How can my child take opioid medications safely?

It is expected your child will be fussier after surgery, especially if your surgeon has your child in No-No's (Velcro arm restraints) to ensure healing. However, in the first few days after surgery, your child may be experiencing pain that isn't relieved by Tylenol and ibuprofen.

Depending on what type of surgery your child had, you may receive a prescription for opioid pain medication. If your child receives a prescription for an opioid pain medication it is for break-through pain only. **Break-through pain** means pain that is not controlled by around-the-clock acetaminophen and ibuprofen. Even if your child needs a dose of opioid medication for break-through pain, **you should still give the over-the-counter medications (Tylenol and ibuprofen).**

If your child has been prescribed Norco, Hycet, Vicodin, Percocet or a different opioid, **please contact the clinic or discuss with your provider how to safely alternate acetaminophen (Tylenol).** These medications also contain acetaminophen and could result in **too much Tylenol being given.**

- Give opioids only as needed and never give more frequently or in higher doses than instructed on the bottle.
- If your child is prescribed a combination medication which includes an opioid **and** acetaminophen (such as Vicodin, Norco, or Hycet), do **not** give additional acetaminophen.
- Never give your child a medication that was not prescribed to them.
- **Medications should always be locked in a safe place and managed by a responsible guardian.**
- If your child is prescribed an opioid medication, they will get a prescription at the time of surgery and it will need to be filled at the hospital or local pharmacy. Not all pharmacies carry the liquid form of opioid medications so you may want to call first.

What are the risks of opioid medications?

Opioid medications can cause

- Nausea
- Constipation
- Drowsiness

- Slowed breathing
- And overdose

They are particularly dangerous if taken with alcohol or other medications such as sleep aids or anti-anxiety medications. They can also cause addiction, especially among people with a history of substance abuse or mental health conditions. Do not share these medications with anyone to whom they were not prescribed.

What can I do to manage my child's constipation?

If your child is taking an opioid medication regularly (at least once a day for 2 days), they should also take an over-the-counter stool softener such as Miralax (polyethylene glycol) according to dosing instructions to avoid constipation. This is available at your local pharmacy and does not need a prescription. If you have questions about safe dosing for your child, please contact the clinic.

How do I dispose of leftover medication?

Old medications are the **number one cause of poisonings** in children under the age of 5. Leftover medications are also **tempting targets for theft**. As soon as your child no longer takes the opioid, dispose of the extra medication by bringing them to a take-back program or a collection site in your area. Find more information on how and where to safely dispose of old medications at <http://michmed.org/MmA6N>

When can my child return to school?

It is safe to return to school or daycare when pain is well controlled and your child is not taking opioid pain medications. Opioid pain medications may affect your child's ability to learn and participate in activities.

Please work with your child's school to accommodate any mobility limitations or weight bearing restrictions your child has. You may contact the clinic if assistance is needed with documentation for the school.

When can my child start driving?

Teenagers who are licensed to drive must be off of all opioid medications before driving. Please contact the clinic or discuss this with your provider at your scheduled post-operative visit. Your child should not resume driving until clearance is given by surgeon. Before driving have your child sit behind the wheel in a parked car to make sure they are able to turn their head and body without pain or limitation.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

For questions and concerns:

- Craniofacial Anomalies Program: (734) 764-2582.
- Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Clinic: 8 AM-5 PM (734) 763-8063
- After hours and on weekends, call Hospital Paging at (734) 936-6267 and ask for the Plastic Surgeon on call.

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