

Pain Control After Kidney Donation Surgery

How much pain will I experience after kidney donation surgery?

Pain after kidney donation surgery is common. The amount of pain is different for different people. The transplant team will work with you to manage it. The goal for pain management is to greatly reduce pain, however **you will not be completely pain free.**

Pain management is important to your recovery after kidney donation. By reducing your pain, the goal is for you to be able to move around easily and take deep breaths in order to prevent complications like pneumonia and blood clots.

How will my pain be managed while in the hospital?

The transplant team will use different methods to help you manage your pain. You will receive both opioid (narcotic) and non-opioid pain medications.

- During the surgery, you will receive a peripheral nerve block (TAP) that will block the nerves in your stomach wall and make the area feel numb. This will start to wear off in 12-24 hours.
- After the surgery, you will receive:
 - Ketorolac (Toradol). This is an injected Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory (NSAID) drug to reduce swelling, pain and fever.
 - Acetaminophen (Tylenol) to take around the clock to reduce pain and fever.
 - Oxycodone (an opioid) to take as needed for severe pain.

How will I manage my pain at home?

You will be discharged home with ibuprofen (®Advil, ®Motrin), acetaminophen and no more than 10 tablets of oxycodone based on your pain control while in the hospital.

- Take the acetaminophen and ibuprofen around the clock as instructed.
 - Do not take more than 3000 mg of acetaminophen in 24 hours.
 - Stop taking ibuprofen 5 days after discharge.
- Take Oxycodone only if you have severe pain, for example pain that is preventing you from being able to talk, take deep breaths, or walk. You may take Oxycodone as needed for the first 2-3 days you are home from the hospital.

How long will I need to be on opioid pain medications?

Every individual is different and may experience pain differently. After donating their kidney most people do not use opioid pain medications longer than two days from discharge from the hospital. Most people are able to manage their pain beyond that with the use of acetaminophen as needed (Reminder: do not take more than 3000 mg in 24 hours).

Do not take opioid pain medications for any purpose other than severe pain.

- **Examples of reasons not to take opioids include:** trouble sleeping, feeling anxious or depressed, and mild aches and pains.
- If you feel that you need opioid pain medications beyond 5 days after surgery you will need to call the clinic.

How can I prevent constipation caused by opioids?

Constipation may worsen the pain from the surgery.

- Use stool softeners and laxatives.
- Drink plenty of water and go for walks.

What can I take for occasional non-surgical pain?

- Acetaminophen is the best pain reliever in people with one kidney.
- Over-the-counter NSAIDs like ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve) are also okay for recent causes of pain like menstrual cramps, minor injuries, and headaches.
 - **Never take ibuprofen and naproxen together.**
- Aspirin 81 mg daily for heart protection is okay if instructed by your clinician.

How much can I take in a day?

Acetaminophen:

- No more than 3000 mg in 24 hours (500 mg every 4 hours or 1000 mg every 8 hours).

NSAIDS such as Ibuprofen or Naproxen:

- Take no more than 1200 mg of ibuprofen in 24 hours (200 mg every 4 hours or 400 mg every 8 hours) for no more than 5 days.
- Take no more than 440mg of naproxen in 24 hours (220 mg every 12 hours) for no more than 5 days.
- Do not take NSAIDs for lingering pain for more than 5 days per month. If your pain is not gone by 5 days, you should contact your health care provider.
- Drink plenty of water while taking NSAIDs.

What else can I do besides take pain medications to decrease my pain?

There are other things besides medications that will help decrease your pain.

- Cold or heat compresses for muscular pain (do not use directly on incision)
- Relaxation, meditation, guided imagery and distraction

- Support from others or counseling

How do I dispose of unused opioid medications?

For your safety and the safety of others in your house, once you no longer need opioid medication for pain management safely dispose of them at an **opioid disposal site**. Please check out the following website to find a location in Michigan <http://michigan-open.org/takebackmap/> or ask the transplant team for help.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by Michigan Medicine for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by Michigan Medicine and for which Michigan Medicine does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Sarah Tischer, PharmD and Lavinia Pacurar, NP

Patient Education by [Michigan Medicine](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). Last Revised 12/2017