

How much pain will I experience after transplant surgery?

Pain after kidney and/or pancreas transplant 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 reduce pain, however **you will not be completely pain free.**

Pain management is important to your recovery after kidney and/or pancreas transplant. 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 may 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:
 - Acetaminophen (Tylenol) to take around the clock to reduce pain.
 - Oxycodone (an opioid) is an oral medication to take as needed for moderate to severe pain.
 - Morphine (an opioid) or hydromorphone (an opioid) are pain medications administered through an IV for severe pain not improved with oxycodone taken orally (by mouth). This will only be given in the first 12 to 24 hours.

How will I manage my pain at home?

You will be discharged home with acetaminophen and oxycodone based on your pain control while in the hospital to get you to your first clinic visit.

- Take the acetaminophen around the clock as instructed.
 - Do not take more than 3000 mg of acetaminophen in 24 hours.
- Take oxycodone only if you have severe pain. Severe pain is pain that prevents you from being able to talk, take deep breaths, or walk.
- The transplant team will evaluate your pain at your clinic visit. The transplant team will continue to prescribe you pain medications if needed for surgical pain related to your transplant surgery and will closely monitor you for the ongoing pain.

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

Every individual is different and may experience pain differently. After transplant surgery most people do not use opioid pain medications longer than 5-7 days from discharge from the hospital. Most people are able to manage their pain beyond that with oral 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 7 days after surgery, you will need to be evaluated by the transplant surgery team. If you do not have enough opioid pain medication to get you to your next clinic visit, you will need to call the transplant clinic and may need to be seen in clinic sooner than your next scheduled appointment.
- Opioid pain medications are not effective for treating nerve pain. Symptoms of nerve pain include numbness, tingling and burning. If you are experiencing nerve pain, please let that transplant team know.

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 after transplant.
- Aspirin 81 mg daily for heart protection is okay if instructed by your doctor.
- **Never take NSAIDs** like ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve).

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).

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 will my chronic pain be managed after kidney transplant?

It is best to manage your chronic pain with the lowest amount of opioids possible before your transplant surgery.

If you have no surgical complications, after 1-2 weeks from your transplant surgery, you will need to return to your health care provider who manages your chronic pain for further pain management.

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.

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