

Managing Your Pain After Gynecologic Oncology Surgery

How can I manage pain after my surgery?

It is normal to have some pain after surgery. Your care team will talk with you about your pain control options, and may prescribe you opioid or non-opioid (Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen) medication to help reduce your pain. Our goal is to manage your pain so that you can function: eat, sleep, breathe deeply and walk.

How do I know what pain control option is best for me?

You will work with your health care provider to decide what pain control option works best for you. Most people can manage their pain with **Around-The-Clock dosing** of acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil etc.). This means that you will take your medications on a set schedule. Many people do not require **any** opioid medication after surgery. There are two non-opioid plans to consider for safely and effectively managing your pain after surgery:

1. Most people will take their doses of Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen **together** every 6 hours. See the example starting at 6:00am in the image on the right.

1. Most people will take their Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen together every 6 hours:	
6 a.m.	Acetaminophen 650 mg (2 pills, 325 mg each) Ibuprofen 600 mg (1 pill, 600 mg)
12 noon	Acetaminophen 650 mg (2 pills, 325 mg each) Ibuprofen 600 mg (1 pill, 600 mg)
6 a.m.	Acetaminophen 650 mg (2 pills, 325 mg each) Ibuprofen 600 mg (1 pill, 600 mg)
12 a.m.	Note: if you wake up, can take Acetaminophen 650 mg (2 pills, 325 mg each) Ibuprofen 600 mg (1 pill, 600 mg)
Continue to alternate every 6 hours	

2. Another option is to **alternate** your doses of Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen every 3 hours. See the example starting at 6:00am in the image on the right.

2. Another option is to alternate Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen every 3 hours:	
6 a.m.	Acetaminophen 650 mg (2 pills, 325 mg each)
9 a.m.	Ibuprofen 600 mg (1 pill, 600 mg)
12 noon	Acetaminophen 650 mg (2 pills, 325 mg each)
3 p.m.	Ibuprofen 600 mg (1 pill, 600 mg)
6 p.m.	Acetaminophen 650 mg (2 pills, 325 mg each)
9 p.m.	Ibuprofen 600 mg (1 pill, 600 mg)
12 a.m.	Note: If you wake up, can take acetaminophen 650 mg (2 pills, 325 mg each)
Continue to alternate every 3 hours	

What are the risks of pain medications?

- **Ibuprofen** may cause upset stomach and indigestion. Taking the medication with food or milk may help avoid these effects.
- **Acetaminophen** -taking more than 3 grams (3000 milligrams or mg) of acetaminophen per day may cause serious injury to your liver and kidneys.

What if my pain is not controlled?

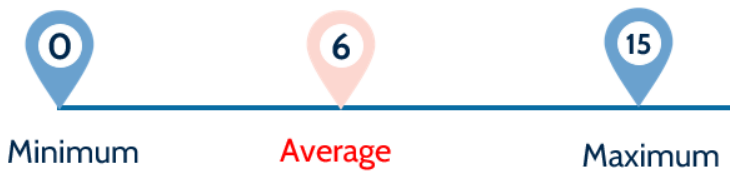
Some people may need opioid pain medication to control their pain at home. If you go home with a prescription for opioids, you will work together with your doctor to decide what number of opioid pills is right for you.

Your pain should improve each day, allowing you to reduce pain medications as your body heals. The image below is a guide for choosing the appropriate

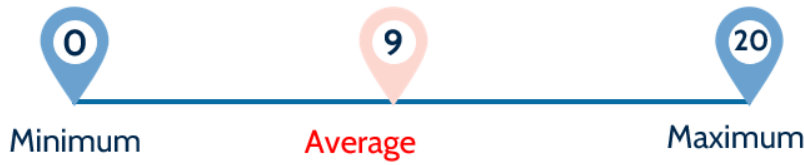
number of opioid pills for each type of surgery. The minimum, average and maximum pill numbers can be used as a benchmark to help you decide what your amount might be.

A guide to choosing the right number of opioid pills for you

If you had a vaginal or laparoscopic hysterectomy:



If you had an abdominal hysterectomy:



Side effects of opioids:

- Drowsiness or severe sleeplessness
- Confusion
- Inability to urinate
- Constipation
- Nausea, vomiting
- Itching

If your doctor prescribes an opioid pain medication you can **replace** one of the acetaminophen or ibuprofen doses with a dose of the opioid.

For example, your schedule could look like this:

12:00 PM	Acetaminophen 650 mg (2 pills of 325 mg)
3:00 PM	Ibuprofen 600 mg (3 pills of 200 mg)
6:00 PM	Oxycodone 5mg (1 pill of 5 mg)
9:00 PM	Ibuprofen 600 mg (3 pills of 200 mg)
12:00 AM	Acetaminophen 650 mg (2 pills of 325 mg)
Continue alternating every 3 hours	

Important:

- If your pain is manageable, avoid taking opioids.
- Never take more frequent or higher doses than prescribed

Visit <http://michmed.org/ea93D> to learn more about taking opioids safely.

Warning: Some opioid pain medications **also contain acetaminophen** in addition to the opioid. Check the label to see if your medication contains acetaminophen and if it does make sure you **count this amount in daily intake** which is less than 3000mg of acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.

Should I worry about becoming addicted to opioids?

Anyone can become addicted. However, addiction is rare if opioids are used for less than 1 week.

Minimize your risk:

- Only use opioids for pain not adequately controlled with Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen
- Use fewer opioids and increase the time between doses as your pain lessens
- Decrease and stop opioids before decreasing or stopping Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen

Be cautious and talk to your care team if:

- You are taking opioids at the same time as other sedating medications. There is an increased risk of overdose.
- You have depression or anxiety, long term (chronic) pain, or a history of alcohol, tobacco or previous prescription drug use or abuse. The risk of developing dependence or addiction increases for you.

How should I store and get rid of my leftover opioids?

To safely store opioids:

- Keep them out of reach of children, teens, and pets
- Store them in private areas and lock them up if possible
- Keep a count of how many pills you have left

For leftover pills:

Dispose of opioids as soon as you no longer need them by taking them to a drug take-back program or a safe drop site.

For more information, visit <https://michigan-open.org/safe-opioid-disposal/>.

Never share or sell your opioid pills. This is a felony under Michigan law.

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