

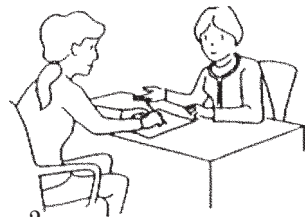
Let's talk about pain

People used to think that severe pain after surgery was something they “just had to put up with.” But with current treatments, that’s no longer true. Today you can work with your nurses and doctors before and after surgery to prevent or relieve pain.

Why control pain?

When your pain is controlled you can:

- Enjoy greater comfort while you heal
- Start walking and doing your breathing exercises so you can get your strength back faster
- Feel better sooner after surgery
- Avoid problems such as pneumonia and blood clots
- Leave the hospital sooner



Before surgery:

Ask the doctor or nurse what to expect:

- Will there be much pain after surgery?
- Where will it occur?
- How long is it likely to last?

Being prepared helps put you in control. You may want to write down your questions before you meet with your doctor or nurse. Understand what operation the doctor is doing, why it is being done, and how it will be done.

The anesthesiologist will discuss the anesthesia options for your surgery during your Pre-Admission Testing (PAT) visit.

Pain Control: What Are The Options?

Both drug and non-drug treatments can be successful in helping to prevent and control pain. The most common pain control methods are described below. You, your doctor and your nurse will decide which ones are right for you.



Pain control methods after surgery

Your options for pain control after surgery may include:

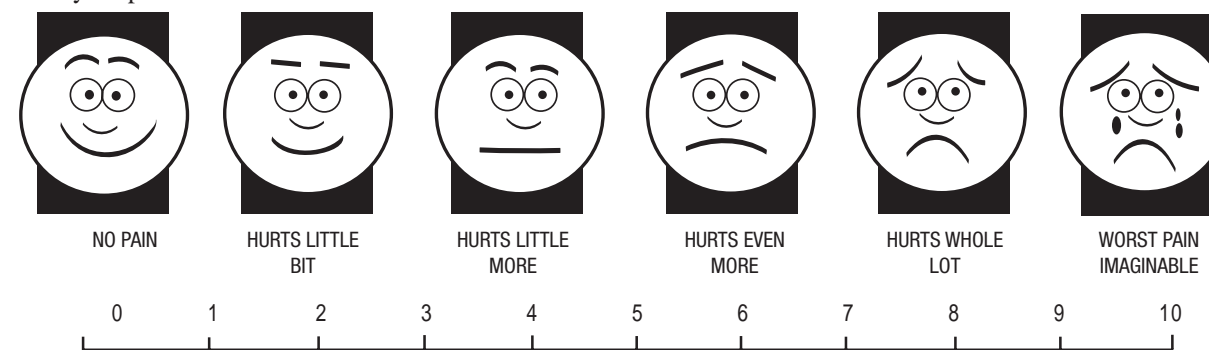
1. **PCA Pump (Patient Controlled Analgesia)**- Patient controlled analgesia allows you to control when you get pain medicine. When you begin to feel pain, you press a button to inject the pain medicine through the intravenous (IV) tube into your vein.
2. **Epidural** - An epidural is a small tube placed in your back by the anesthesiologist. The tube is connected to a pump which delivers pain medicine.
3. **Injection** - An injection is a “shot” of medicine that is given into a muscle.
4. **Pills** - Pain pills are taken by mouth in pill or liquid form.

What can you do to help keep your pain under control?

- Take your pain medicine (or ask) the nurse for pain medicine when the pain starts.
- If you know your pain will worsen when you start getting out of bed, walking, or doing breathing exercises, take the pain medication first. It’s harder to ease pain once it has taken hold.

This is an example of the pain scale you will use after surgery:

Rate your pain on a scale from 0 - 10.



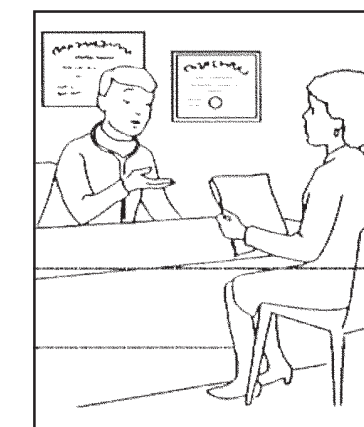
Adapted from Yale Pain Management Services/face rating scale.

How to communicate your pain

We ask that you help doctors, nurses, and pharmacists to measure your pain. Doctors, nurses, and pharmacists will ask you to rate your pain on a scale of “0 to 10” or you may choose a “face” on the scale which best describes your pain.

Before your surgery, you and your nurse will identify an “Acceptable Pain Level.” An example of an acceptable pain level is 0 - 5. This means if your pain score is greater than five on the pain scale, you will be given medicine to relieve your pain.

Non-drug treatments you can use:



Relaxation exercises

Exercise 1: Slow rhythmic breathing for relaxation

1. Breathe in slowly and deeply.
2. As you breathe out slowly, feel yourself beginning to relax; feel the tension leaving your body.
3. Now breathe in and out slowly and regularly, at whatever rate is comfortable to you. You may wish to try abdominal breathing.
4. To help you focus on your breathing and to breathe slowly and rhythmically: (a) breathe in as you say silently to yourself, “in, two, three”;



- (b) breathe out as you say silently to yourself, “out, two, three.” Each time you breathe out, say silently to yourself a word such as “peace” or “relax.”
- Do steps 1 through 4 only once or repeat steps 3 and 4 for up to 20 minutes.
 - End with a slow deep breath. As you breathe out say to yourself, “I feel alert and relaxed.”

Exercise 2. Simple touch, massage, or warmth for relaxation. Touch and massage are age-old methods of helping others relax. Some examples are:

- Brief touch or massage, e.g., hand holding or briefly touching or rubbing a person’s shoulder.
- Warm foot soak in a basin of warm water, or wrap the feet in a warm, wet towel.
- Massage (3 to 10 minutes) may consist of the whole body or be restricted to back, feet, or hands. If the patient is modest or cannot move or turn easily in bed, consider massaging of the hands and feet.
 - Use a warm lubricant, e.g., a small bowl of hand lotion may be warmed in the microwave oven, or a bottle of lotion may be warmed by placing it in a sink of hot water for about 10 minutes.
 - Massage for relaxation is usually done with smooth, long, slow strokes. (Rapid strokes, circular movements, and squeezing of tissues tend to stimulate circulation and increase arousal.) However, try several degrees of pressure along with different types of massage, e.g., kneading, stroking, and circling. Determine which is preferred.

Exercise 3. Peaceful past experience

Something may have happened to you a while ago that brought you peace and comfort. You may be able to draw on that past experience to bring you peace or comfort now.

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Think about these questions:

- Can you remember any situation, even when you were a child, when you felt calm, peaceful, secure, hopeful, or comfortable?
- Have you ever daydreamed about something peaceful? What were you thinking of?
- Do you get a dreamy feeling when you listen to music? Do you have any favorite music?
- Do you have any favorite poetry that you find uplifting or reassuring?
- Have you ever been religiously active? Do you have favorite readings, hymns, or prayers? Even if you haven’t heard or thought of them for many years, childhood religious experiences may still be very soothing.

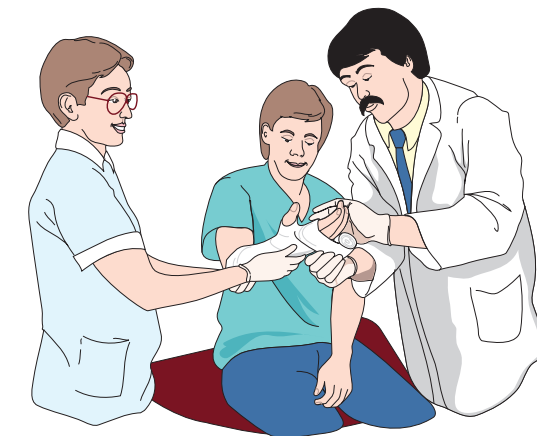
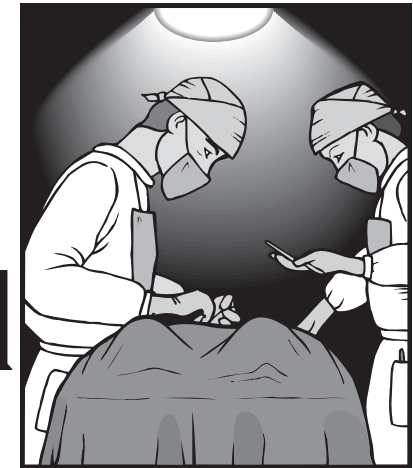
Exercise 4. Active listening to recorded music

- Obtain the following: A cassette player or tape recorder.** (Small, battery-operated ones are more convenient.) **Earphone or headset.** (This is a more demanding stimulus than a speaker a few feet away, and it avoids disturbing others.) **Cassette or music you like.**
- Mark time to the music,** e.g., tap out the rhythm with your fingers or nod your head. This helps you concentrate on the music rather than your discomfort.
- Keep your eyes open and focus steadily on one stationary spot or object.** If you wish to close your eyes, picture something about the music.
- Listen to the music at a comfortable volume.** If the discomfort increases, try increasing the volume; decrease the volume when the discomfort decreases.
- If this is not effective enough,** try adding or changing one or more of the following: massage your body in rhythm to the music; try other music; mark time to the music in more than one manner, e.g., tap your foot and finger at the same time.

A Patient’s Guide

Pain Control

While You Heal



ST JOHN
Health System

St. John Health System is a growing network of community-based health care services including ten hospitals and 175 ambulatory centers and medical offices located throughout Southeast Michigan

A member of Ascension Health