

Women's Health Discussion Guide

How will my pain after surgery be managed?

There are many options to help control your pain after surgery. Ask your doctor what the best plan is for you.

How can I minimize the need for opioids? What non-opioid options do I have?

There are a variety of medications you may receive before, during and after surgery to minimize your need for opioids. They may include non-opioids, such as NSAIDS, like aspirin or ibuprofen, or local anesthetics that are injected during a procedure and numb the area around the surgical site.

What do you need to know about me to help customize my pain management?

Your medical history (e.g., medication allergies, breathing/respiratory issues, stomach/GI issues, previous history of substance abuse, current medications you are taking, etc.) will help your surgeon better understand your treatment needs. Also informing your surgeon about your living situation (e.g., caregiver, resides alone, access to transportation, needs to use stairs, etc.) will help them to understand your specific needs and create a better plan for you. If you have young children at home, please let your surgeon know, since some surgeries may require that you don't lift anything over a certain weight.

Is this procedure associated with a lot of pain?

Ask your doctor about the level of pain that is typically associated with your surgery, so you know what to expect afterwards.

When should I start talking to my doctor about pain management during childbirth? What are my pain management options during and after childbirth?

It is important to explore all your pain management options with your doctor ahead of time. Talk to your doctor in your third trimester to determine what options are best for you for either vaginal or C-section deliveries. Since nearly one-third of births are C-section, we encourage you to discuss options for both delivery types, just in the event you require an emergency/unplanned C-section.

What pain management options are available for an emergency C-section that are best for me and the baby?

There are a variety of pain management options available before, during and after surgery. Since nearly one-third of births occur via C-section, it shows the importance of having a pain management conversation prior to labor beginning when emotions are running high. Ask your doctor in advance about what option is best for you in this type of situation.

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When I return home, what guidelines do I have/what restrictions should I follow? When can I get back to my normal activities?

It's important to understand how long it might take for you to get back to everyday activities (e.g., returning to work, food/dietary restrictions, exercising, weight lifting restrictions, driving, etc.). There may be things you can do on your own that can help speed your recovery (e.g., proper wound care, physical therapy, etc.). Remind your doctor of any young children you might have at home and see when it is safe to lift/carry them.

How long will it take to fully recover from surgery? What will it involve?

The recovery from surgery is personal and can vary depending on the surgery performed, your overall health and you. Talk to your doctor about what you will need after your surgery.

What happens when the medications from surgery wear off?

The type of medication(s) you receive can depend on the type of procedure you have. Talk with your doctor about any pain or discomfort you may feel after surgery and make sure you have a plan in place. Also, ask about non-opioid options that provide pain relief for the first few days following surgery, often when pain is at its peak.

If You're Prescribed An Opioid, Ask These Questions:

- Is this safe to take with my other medications?
- Is this the lowest appropriate dose/number of pills?
- When can I stop taking this, and how should I wean off?
- How can I properly dispose of the pills if I don't use all of them?