

Pain Management

After Mastectomy or Breast Reduction



Having some pain after surgery is normal. Our goal is to help you manage that pain so you can rest, breathe easily, and get moving. The following strategies will not completely take away your pain, but will allow you to tolerate it as your body heals.

If you have severe pain that is not managed with these strategies, or if you are having severe nausea, vomiting, constipation, or fever, you should call your surgeon's office or visit urgent care.

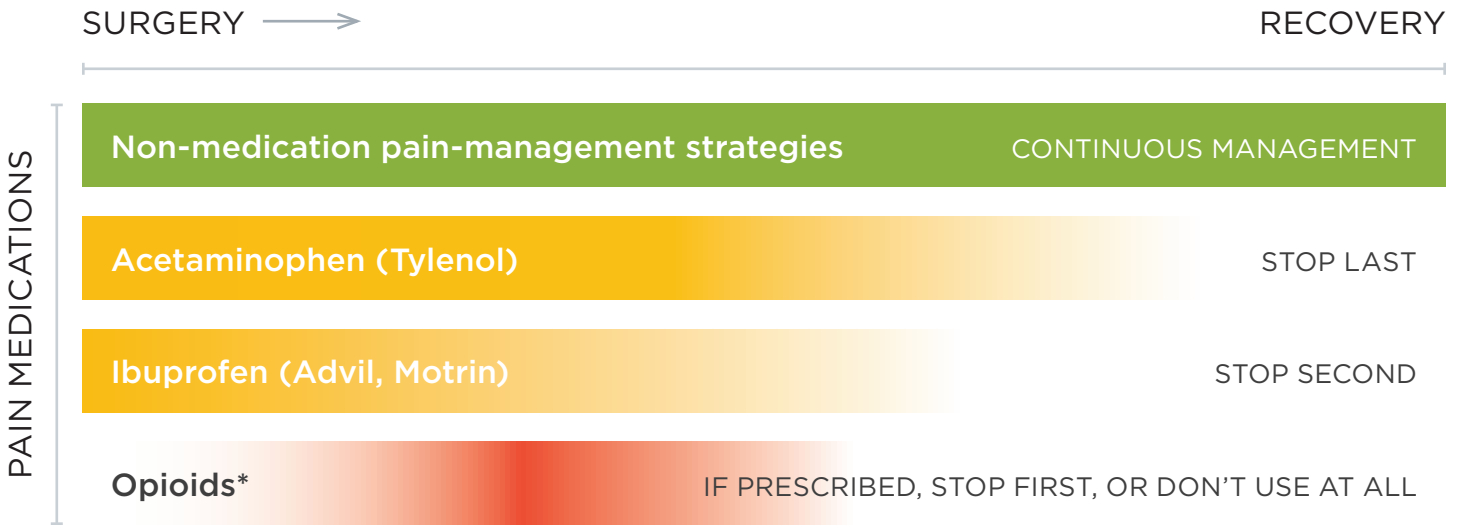


Non-medication pain-management strategies

All pain medications have side effects. Most patients also benefit from non-medication comfort measures to help limit the amount of medications they have to take. These include:

- Ice packs: Use for 20 minutes on axillary incision sites. Then take a break for 20 minutes (Please do not place ice packs on your breast incisions, as this can lead to poor wound healing).
- Suck on ice or a lozenge for sore throat
- Take a short walk
- Listening to music
- Watching TV
- Meditate
- Acupuncture
- Aromatherapy
- Drink tea and eat healthy food
- Anything else you usually do to relax

How to use pain medications



* Not prescribed routinely

Acetaminophen (Tylenol)

- Take 1000mg **three times daily** on a regular basis (whether you think you need it or not) until all of your pain is gone, and then as needed for mild pain.
- Never take more than 4000mg of acetaminophen from all medication sources in a day. Be aware that if you are prescribed Norco, Vicodin, or Percocet, these medications also include acetaminophen.
- Available over the counter without a prescription.

Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin)

- Take this if pain is not controlled with acetaminophen alone.
- Take 600mg every six hours, as needed for pain that is not controlled with acetaminophen.
- Be sure to take with food.
- You may take this together with acetaminophen or in between acetaminophen doses on a regular basis.
- Do not take more than 3200mg in a day.
- Available over the counter without a prescription.

Opioid (e.g., tramadol, oxycodone, Norco)

Only take this if the acetaminophen and ibuprofen are not enough. It's OK to not take if you do not need it. Stop this first when pain is tolerable.

- Includes oxycodone, hydrocodone/acetaminophen (Norco or Vicodin), oxycodone/acetaminophen (Percocet), and tramadol, all only available by prescription.
- Take this medication as a last resort if you still have uncontrolled pain despite taking acetaminophen and ibuprofen.
- Take this medication as little as possible because opioid/narcotic pain medications are associated with significant side effects (dizziness, confusion, slowed breathing, constipation, etc.) and can lead to overdose and addiction.
- As your pain improves, you can cut down on this medication by either reducing the number of tablets taken or by stretching out the time between doses.
- Never drink alcohol, drive, or operate heavy machinery while on this medication.
- Available over the counter without a prescription.

