

Advice after surgery under a general anaesthetic

Information for patients



Driving

Anaesthetic drugs remain in the body for up to 48 hours; they gradually wear off over this time. For 48 hours after your anaesthetic, while you still have the drugs in your body, **you are not legally allowed to drive a car or any other vehicle, or a bicycle. This is a DVLA requirement.**

After this time, you need to think about whether your wound or any pain you may have might prevent you from driving safely. A simple way to check whether you are able to drive safely is if you can perform an emergency stop comfortably while your car is parked.

When we discharge you we will also give you specific instructions about returning to driving after the type of surgery you have had.

The next 24 hours

- **You need to have a responsible adult accompany you home and stay with you for the next 24 hours.** This is because a general anaesthetic can make you feel sleepy and disorientated for up to two days afterwards.
- You will also need help to look after any children or pets you may have.
- Do not operate machinery or appliances, such as the cooker or kettle.
- Do not lock yourself in the bathroom or toilet, or make yourself inaccessible to the person looking after you.
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat a light diet, avoiding heavy or greasy foods.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Avoid strenuous exercise.
- Do not make any important decisions or sign any legal or important documents.

Pain relief at home – a guide to your painkillers and how to take them

You may have been given more than one type of painkiller to take home with you. This is because each type of painkiller works in a different way to help relieve your pain. The types of painkiller are:

- paracetamol
- an anti-inflammatory, for example, diclofenac or ibuprofen
- a morphine-based painkiller, for example, codeine phosphate, tramadol.

It is safe to take these different types of painkiller together or at different times of the day. The following information will help you choose which painkiller to take, depending on how severe your pain is.

Please make sure you also have a supply of paracetamol and ibuprofen at home.

Mild pain

Take your paracetamol regularly, as prescribed on the prescription label. Do not take more than 8 tablets in 24 hours.

Moderate pain

Take your paracetamol regularly and also your anti-inflammatory painkiller, as described on the prescription label.

If you have not been prescribed an anti-inflammatory painkiller, take your morphine-based painkiller (as described on the prescription label) and also take your paracetamol.

You may find that you only need to take the morphine-based painkiller once or twice during the day.

Severe pain

Take all your painkillers on a regular basis, as described on the prescription labels. It may be of benefit to take your paracetamol and morphine-based ones together and to take the anti-inflammatory ones 2-3 hours later.

The morphine-based painkiller may cause constipation. If this happens, drink plenty of fluids and increase your intake of dietary fibre, such as fresh fruit. If you continue to be constipated please speak to your GP; they may prescribe you medication to help.

It is advisable to take only 30mg (1 tablet) of codeine at first.

If the pain settles then there is no need to take any more. If the pain does not settle then you can take a further 30mg (1 tablet).

How long will I need to take my painkillers?

As you heal you will feel less pain. Once your pain is controlled and is mild, you should only take paracetamol. If your pain remains severe for more than a few days or is not relieved by your painkillers, you should contact your GP or out of hours service.

Never give prescribed tablets to other people, as they may not be safe for them to take. Any left over painkillers should be taken to your local pharmacy for safe disposal.

Keep all medicines out of the reach of children.

Pain relief:

Next due at:

Paracetamol

Anti-inflammatory

Morphine-based painkiller

Other

Follow-up appointment

A follow-up appointment is not always needed. If the doctor has asked to see you again you will receive an appointment letter in the post.

Follow up appointment not needed/needed in weeks.

Results

If you are waiting for results after your surgery these will be sent to your GP and also posted to you. If you have not received them in four weeks, please contact your GP.

How to contact us

Please contact us if you have any of the following problems overnight tonight or over the next 24 hours:

- new, fresh or increased bleeding
- pain that is not controlled with painkillers
- vomiting which prevents you from getting enough fluids
- difficulty in passing urine.

Ward:

Tel:
(9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday)

Outside of these hours:

Tel:

After this time, please contact your own GP or the NHS 111 out of hour's service (dial 111 – freephone from landlines and mobiles).

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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