

## 4) When to take painkillers?

- If pain score (NRS) is 4 or above after the surgery, you may ask for additional painkillers from the nurse in the recovery area.
- You are advised to take painkillers regularly as instructed for the first 3 days after surgery, as prevention is better than treatment.
- After 3 days of regular analgesics, if NRS>4 or moderate pain, please continue to take analgesics.
- Pain may increase during activities, even when it is well controlled at rest. If you have already taken regular painkillers, you may add prn drugs as instructed.
- Painkillers may have side effects, but most of them are mild or temporary. If the problem persists or is disturbing, please contact medical staff for details.



## 5) Finally, here are some non-pharmacological methods to alleviate pain

- Relax, watch television, listen to music, have a chat with your friends, read your favourite book, etc.
- Perform stretching exercises.
- Progressive muscle relaxation technique: tense and relax your muscle groups slowly from head to toe in a stepwise manner.
- Deep breathing exercise: Put your hands on your tummy. Breathe slowly and deeply (your tummy blows up like a balloon during deep breathing). Then breathe out slowly and relax. The aim is to breathe deeply and slowly in and out for about 6 times a minute.
- Avoid stretching the wound
  - ◆ You may cover your abdominal wound lightly with your hands during coughing or sneezing. This can reduce the wound stretching and hence reduce pain.
  - ◆ For other wounds, eg. Leg wound, avoid walking too fast, and be careful not to apply unnecessary pressure over the wound.

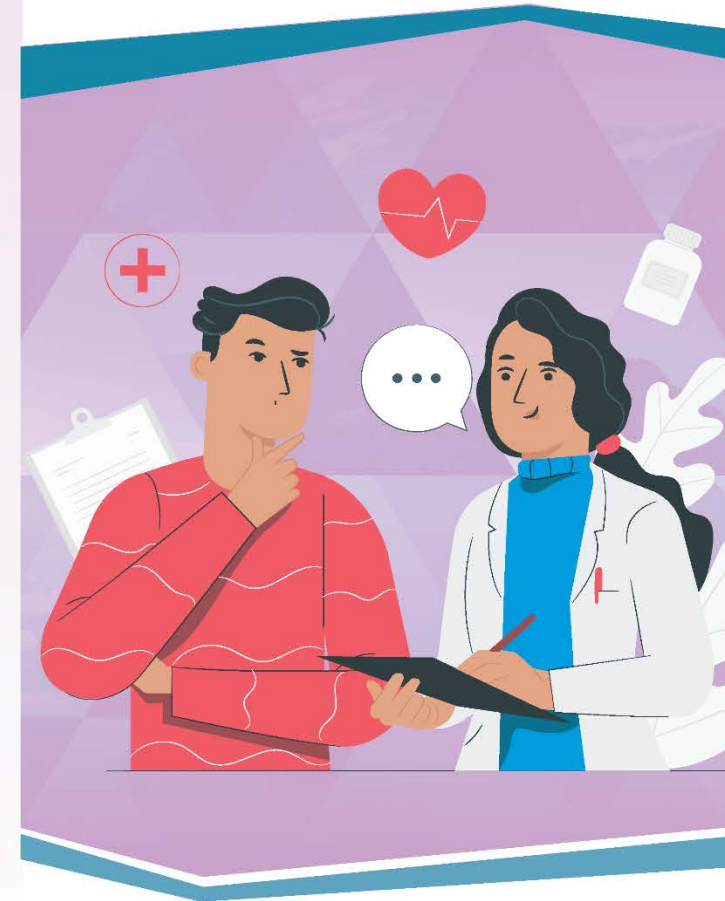
**Patient Empowerment Programme,  
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## Day Surgery

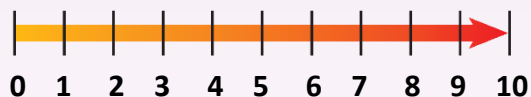
# Pain Management Tips



In general, some pain is to be expected following any type of surgery. We'll now explain how to manage pain effectively.

## 1) Firstly, pain assessment can be done by 2 simple methods:

- i. Numerical rating scales (NRS): use numbers to rate pain from 0 to 10; 0 means pain free while 10 represents the worst pain imaginable.



- ii. Categorical scales: use words to communicate the severity of pain (eg, no pain, mild pain, moderate pain, severe pain, worst pain imaginable).



## 2) Commonly used pain killers

Regular medication	Common side effects	Management
Paracetamol (Panadol)	Rarely any within safe dosage	
Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) eg. Ibuprofen	Most people don't have any side effect if NSAID is used for short term postoperatively, but some may have stomach discomfort  In rare situations, heart attack, stroke or kidney failure may occur	Take after meal  If any stomach upset, can take with meal or milk  Avoid taking with other NSAID  Stop taking if any black/bloody stools, and seek medical help

Take when needed (PRN) drugs	Common side effects	Management
Tramadol, DF118	Nausea, vomiting, dizziness, sleepiness  Prescribed dosage for postoperative use normally won't cause addiction	Take antiemetic drugs and try non-pharmacological treatment

## 3) How to take painkillers effectively?

**Aim: take painkillers to keep the pain score less than 4 out of 10 or mild pain.**

Type of surgery	Suitable painkillers
Minor surgery (eg. minor tissue excision)	Take paracetamol/ibuprofen regularly for 2 to 3 days
Other surgery (eg. ankle/ knee joint arthroscopy, inguinal hernia repair, varicose vein surgery, laparoscopic cholecystectomy)	Take regular oral paracetamol and ibuprofen for 2 to 3 days  If still painful 1 hour after taking regular analgesics, may take prn analgesics, eg. tramadol/ DF118

