

Pain Management After Surgery: Nondrug Recovery Toolkit

Helping orthopaedic surgery patients use simple, nondrug steps to manage pain, reduce swelling, and improve movement during recovery

Managing pain after orthopaedic surgery involves more than medication. Simple daily steps, such as using ice, elevating the area, and moving gently, may help reduce swelling and stiffness. These steps may ease discomfort and support a smoother, more confident recovery.



What This Means for You

Pain is common after surgery. Medicine may help; however, it is only one part of recovery. You also can use simple daily steps to lower pain, reduce swelling, and improve movement. These steps may help you use less pain medication.

Helpful Recovery Tools

Some of the best tools are simple:



Ice



Elevation



Gentle movement



Physical therapy



Good sleep position

These tools work best when used together. Ice helps reduce pain and swelling. Elevation helps fluid drain away from the surgery area. Movement keeps joints and muscles from getting stiff.

Movement Matters

Many patients think they should rest as much as possible; however, too much rest may increase stiffness and pain. Safe movement improves blood flow, keeps joints flexible, and helps healing. Some discomfort is normal; however, movement should help you feel better over time, not worse.

Sleep and Positioning

Pain may feel worse at night. It may be hard to get comfortable. Try using pillows for support or changing positions to reduce pressure. Good positioning may help you sleep better and feel more comfortable.

What is Normal During Recovery

As you heal, you may notice:

- Aching or soreness
- Stiffness, especially after resting
- Swelling
- Pain that improves with movement

These are common signs of healing, especially early in recovery.

Key Takeaway

Recovery is not just about medication. Using simple tools such as ice, elevation, movement, physical therapy, and good sleep position may reduce symptoms and help you return to daily activities.

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