



Throat Care

After surgery

Knowing how to manage your throat pain after surgery will help to ease your recovery. Read this handout to find out what kind of pain to expect, how to manage it, how to reduce pain with swallowing, and to learn basic information about narcotic pain medicine.

What kind of pain should I expect, and what can I do about it?

Surgery in any part of the body hurts for several days. Once the site heals, the pain goes away. The throat area is no different.

Two types of throat pain are common after surgery:

- **Resting pain** is the result of inflammation at the surgical site. This type of pain is constant, even when you are resting, but low-level compared to activity pain.
- The clinic nurse will call you a couple of days after your surgery. He or she will get you started on medicines as needed, and will help with other problems you may have.
- Every swallow and some speaking causes sharp painful feelings in the first two weeks after surgery. This **activity pain** can be intense, but it doesn't last long. The pain stops when you finish swallowing, and can be managed both with narcotic medicine and by changing how you swallow.
- Take your medicine as prescribed.

It hurts to swallow – What should I do?

- Chewing doesn't hurt – but moving your food from mouth to throat hurts because you are moving your surgical site.
- Limit the number of times you swallow during the first few days. Rather than swallowing saliva, spit it out. Your body doesn't make as much saliva after surgery.
- Chewing does not hurt after throat surgery. Chew your food well, and make sure that the food is completely covered with saliva or other liquid to help it slide down your throat. Dry food or food not chewed well will cause pain when you swallow.

Questions?

Call 206-598-4022

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

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- Eat foods that slide easily down your throat for the first week or two, such as soup, ices, mashed potatoes, and eggs.
- Most people can expect to lose several pounds during this time. Food that can be ground up well with the teeth, such as nuts, crackers, and cheese, causes your body to make thick saliva. These foods are easier to swallow than meats, fruits and many vegetables. The food must be well-chewed and moistened.
- As your pain goes away, you may notice a sense of tightness or scratchiness in the area of the incision (cut). This feeling gradually goes away after many weeks.
- Be patient – it takes 6 weeks for the scar to fully form and tighten up.

Narcotics for Pain Relief

- Narcotics are medicines that help relieve your pain after surgery.
- They can come in either pill or liquid form.
- Don't drive or use machinery while on narcotic medicines.
- Narcotics can make it hard to move your bowels. Keep stool softeners on hand, such as prune juice, milk of magnesia, and dulcolax.
- Don't skip your pain medicine! It can only help you if you take it.

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