

Post-Op Pain Management

Serenitas Anaesthesia Care

Essential tips for a safe & comfortable recovery | Australian Edition

Pain after surgery is normal and expected — but it can be well managed. Good pain control helps you breathe deeply, move safely and recover faster. Use this guide alongside your discharge instructions from Serenitas Anaesthesia Care.

1 | Pain Medications

Medication	Common Names	Key Points
Paracetamol	Panadol, Panamax	First-line for most pain. Up to 1 g every 4–6 h (max 4 g/day). Take regularly, not just when needed.
NSAIDs	Ibuprofen (Nurofen), Naproxen, Celecoxib	Reduces inflammation. Take with food. Avoid if kidney issues, stomach ulcers, or told not to by your team.
Weak Opioids	Codeine, Tramadol	For moderate pain. Can cause constipation, nausea, drowsiness. Do NOT drive. Short-term use only.
Strong Opioids	Oxycodone, Morphine, Tapentadol	Prescribed for severe pain only. Take lowest effective dose. Do NOT drive or operate machinery.
Local / Nerve Blocks	Bupivacaine, Ropivacaine	May be placed by your anaesthetist — provides excellent targeted relief for 12–24+ hours.

■ **Never exceed prescribed doses. Combining paracetamol products (e.g. Panadol + cold & flu tablets) can cause accidental overdose. If pain is not controlled, contact your care team — do not double-dose.**

2 | Non-Drug Pain Management Strategies

Ice & Cold Therapy

Apply an ice pack wrapped in a cloth for 15–20 min every 2 hours during the first 48 hours. Reduces swelling and numbs the area. Never apply ice directly to skin.

Rest & Positioning

Elevate the affected limb above heart level to reduce swelling. Use pillows for support. Avoid positions that increase pressure on the surgical site.

Deep Breathing & Splinting

If your chest or abdomen is sore, hold a pillow firmly against the site before coughing or breathing deeply. This 'splinting' technique significantly reduces pain.

Gentle Early Movement

Unless told otherwise, gentle movement and short walks from day 1–2 improve circulation, reduce clot risk and speed recovery. Increase activity gradually each day.



Relaxation & Distraction

Slow breathing, mindfulness, music and guided meditation activate the body's natural pain-dampening pathways. Apps such as Calm or Smiling Mind are freely available.



Heat (after 48–72 hours)

Warmth relaxes muscle spasm and eases ongoing aching. Use a wheat bag or warm shower. Do NOT use heat over open wounds, sutures or numb areas.

3 | The Multimodal Approach — Best Practice in Australia

Your anaesthetist may use a **multimodal analgesia** plan — combining several different medications and techniques at lower doses, to achieve better pain relief with fewer side effects than relying on opioids alone. This is the gold standard recommended by ANZCA and the Australian Pain Society.

■ Do This	■ Track & Communicate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take medications on a regular schedule — not just when pain peaks • Combine paracetamol + NSAID where safe — they work differently • Use nerve blocks / local anaesthetic while they are still working • Ask your nurse for pain relief before it becomes severe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep a pain diary — score pain 0–10 each morning and evening • Reduce opioid use as soon as pain allows — taper gradually • Plan ahead for the night — pain can worsen with fatigue • Tell your team if medications are not working — alternatives exist

4 | When to Seek Immediate Help

■ CALL 000	■ CALL YOUR SURGEON / HOSPITAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe chest pain or difficulty breathing • Sudden heavy bleeding or haemorrhage • Collapse, loss of consciousness or seizure • Signs of a severe allergic reaction (hives, swelling, throat tightening) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain that is worsening instead of improving after day 2–3 • Fever above 38.5°C, chills or signs of infection at the wound • Redness, swelling or heat spreading around the wound • Nausea/vomiting preventing you from taking oral pain medications • Numbness, tingling or weakness in a limb that is new or worsening

■ If you are concerned about your pain at any time, do not wait — contact your care team. Nurse-On-Call (Victoria): 1300 60 60 24 | Emergency: 000

Opioid Safety Reminder: Store all opioid medications locked away from children. Return unused opioids to your pharmacy for safe disposal — do not flush or bin them. If you feel dependent on opioids or have concerns about use, speak to your GP or call **DirectLine (Vic): 1800 888 236** (24 h, free, confidential).

Disclaimer: This guide is for general informational purposes only and is based on ANZCA, Australian Pain Society and TGA guidelines current at time of publication. It does not replace personalised medical advice. Always follow your anaesthetist's, surgeon's and hospital's specific discharge instructions. Medication doses given are for healthy adults — individual requirements vary. In an emergency, dial 000. | Version 1.0 — 2026.