

Medication after Top Surgery

This information sheet looks at the kinds of medications you might need after top surgery and where you can buy them. All of the medications and other items listed can be purchased from a local chemist, most supermarkets, or online.

It is very important that you read the information leaflet in every packet of medicine you purchase before taking any. Make sure that the medication you buy is safe to take alongside any other medications you are already taking, and that you are taking the appropriate dose. If you have any doubts about whether the medication you are purchasing is suitable for you, speak to a pharmacist or contact your surgeon.

Painkillers

The most commonly taken painkillers are paracetamol and ibuprofen. Ibuprofen is a Non-Steroid Anti-Inflammatory drug (NSAID) and they can be really effective for post-surgical pain because they reduce inflammation (swelling).

However, some surgeons advise their patients to wait a certain amount of time after surgery before taking NSAIDs because they slightly increase your risk of bleeding. They also may not be appropriate if you have asthma as NSAIDs can sometimes make your asthma symptoms worsen.

Please follow **your** surgeon's advice regarding painkillers and do not take ibuprofen if you have been instructed not to. **If you have any doubts about what painkillers to take, please contact your surgeon.**

Stool Softeners

Constipation is a very common issue for patients who've had surgery, and you obviously want to avoid straining if you've had surgery! It's really important to drink plenty of fluids and eat lots of fibre and protein, as well as fruit and veg during your recovery. This will help to manage your constipation and speed up your recovery. However, many people take stool softeners as well to ease their constipation.

A stool softener like Docusate or a fibre laxative like Fybogel are the best ones to start with. If these are not effective, your doctor might prescribe a stimulant laxative. You can talk to your chemist about what might be the right laxative for you.

Antihistamines

Antihistamines can help reduce the itching you have around your surgery site as they block the effects of the chemical in your body (histamines) that make you itch. You should try using ice-packs first, but in case the itching is unbearable, you can use medication to help.

Loratadine and Cetirizine Hydrochloride are the two most common types. Different people respond in different ways to antihistamines so you might want to try both to see which one works better for you. These are one-a-day tablets. If you find one isn't working for you, don't try a different one until the next day.

Other medications

Many people find that their lips and throat are dry or sore after having surgery or a stay in hospital, so you might find lip salve or vaseline helpful in preventing your lips from cracking. Lozenges may also be helpful in soothing a sore throat.

Sun cream

As much as you may want to show off your new chest, it is advised you keep your scars out of direct sunlight for 1 year post-surgery to aid in the appearance and healing of your scars. If you do go out in the sun, it's very important to use SPF. The best SPF sun creams to use on sensitive skin are any that are marketed for children, as these are usually a high-SPF, are unscented, and contain very few additives.

You can find more about all of the medications we have mentioned below:

Painkillers

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/which-painkiller-to-use/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/paracetamol-for-adults/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/ibuprofen-for-adults/>

Stool softeners

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/laxatives/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/docusate/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/fybogel-ispaghula-husk/>

Antihistamines

<https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/loratadine/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/cetirizine/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/promethazine/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/fexofenadine/>

Sun creams

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/sunscreen-and-sun-safety/>

There are lots of brands of medication available, but most of the time, branding doesn't make a difference to the medication. A 32-tablet packet of paracetamol is usually 20p - 40p. A 32-tablet packet of ibuprofen is usually 40p - 60p. Store's own-brand lozenges, antihistamines, and children's sun cream will probably be much cheaper than well-known brands.

Home Bargains and Lidl are usually the cheapest places to buy non-brand medications like antihistamines, but most supermarkets and chemists will have similarly-priced non-brand medications.