Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

How to Manage Pain After Your Robotic or Laparoscopic Abdominal Surgery

This information explains ways to manage pain after your robotic or laparoscopic (LA-puh-ruh-SKAH-pik) abdominal surgery. You can do these along with or instead of taking pain medication.

About robotic or laparoscopic abdominal surgery

During your robotic or laparoscopic abdominal surgery, your doctor will put gas into your abdomen (belly). This makes room for your surgeon to see the inside of your abdomen.

The gas puts pressure on the inside of your abdomen. It can also move to other areas of your body. This may make you feel bloated or have pain in different areas of your body, especially your shoulders. The gas will leave your body through belching (burping), flatulence (farting), or while having a bowel movement (pooping).

After your surgery, you may have different types of pain. It's normal to have pain near your incisions (surgical cuts). This can last a different amount of time for each person.

Ways to manage pain after robotic or laparoscopic abdominal surgery

Your care team will give you pain medication after your surgery. If it doesn't control your pain, tell your healthcare provider. You can also do these things to help:

Listen to music with headphones

If you own a pair of headphones that you like, bring them to the hospital. You'll also get a pair at the hospital.

Move your legs

While you're in bed:

- Bend and straighten your legs.
- Bend your knees and put your feet flat on the bed. With your legs together, gently rock your knees from side to side.

While you're in the hospital

Try to start walking within 4 hours of your surgery. While you're in the hospital, walk every 1 to 2 hours while you're awake, if you can. A staff member will help you.

At home

After you leave the hospital, keep walking at home if you can. If you need help, ask your caregiver.

Drink mint or ginger tea

Drinking tea can help pass the gas causing pain or discomfort after your surgery.

Use a hot or cold pack

If you have shoulder or abdominal pain, ask a nurse for a hot or cold pack. A hot pack improves blood flow to the area and can relax and soothe the muscles. A cold pack can reduce swelling and numb the pain.

Do not put the hot or cold pack directly on your skin. Wrap it in a towel or cloth and put it on the painful area. Leave the pack on the area for up to 20 minutes, then take it off for at least one hour.

Get rest and sleep

Getting rest during the day and sleep during the night can help ease your pain after surgery. If you can, have quiet time alone in your room.

Meditate

These meditation videos may help you. You can watch them online or on the TV in your hospital room:

- *Managing Pain with Meditation: A Guided Visualization (Robin Hardbattle)* (www.mskcc.org/videos/managing-pain-meditation)
- *Mindful Breathing Meditation (Emily Herzin)* (www.mskcc.org/videos/mindful-breathing-meditation)
- *Day at the Beach: A Guided Visualization (Robin Hardbattle)* (www.mskcc.org/videos/guided-imagery-meditation-day-beach)
- *Grassy Meadow: A Guided Visualization (Robin Hardbattle)* (www.mskcc.org/videos/guided-imagery-meditation-grassy-meadow)

Use acupressure

Acupressure is when you use your fingers to apply pressure to specific places on your body. Watch *Acupressure for Pain and Headaches* (www.mskcc.org/pe/acupressure_pain_headaches) online or on the TV in your hospital room for more information.

Ask for touch therapy

Talk with a nurse before asking your caregiver for touch therapy (massage). They can tell you if you should avoid massaging any areas of your body. Watch *Touch Therapy for Caregivers* (www.mskcc.org/videos/touch-therapy-caregivers) online or on the TV in your hospital room for more information.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if you still have pain after trying these things and pain medication doesn't help.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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