

Pain Reduction Strategies for Joint Replacement Surgery

By Joanna Chau

When more than 2,000 patients visit the NCH Healthcare System every year for joint replacement surgery, one of their primary concerns is pain.

To minimize patient discomfort, the entire orthopedic staff at NCH has designed a multimodal pain management approach.

The first step is the hospital's pre-operative patient education class, which focuses on alleviating anxiety before surgery.

"It helps to prepare patients for the unknown, answer their questions and help them understand what takes place post surgery, including pain management," said Erin Raney, RN BSN, the orthopedic floor's Nurse Manager. "The better physically and mentally prepared patients are before surgery, the better they do after."

Following the operation, the type and degree of pain are determined by asking the patient to describe any pain, using a zero to ten pain intensity scale. Our Nursing staff anticipates the needs of our patients in order to proactively manage their pain.

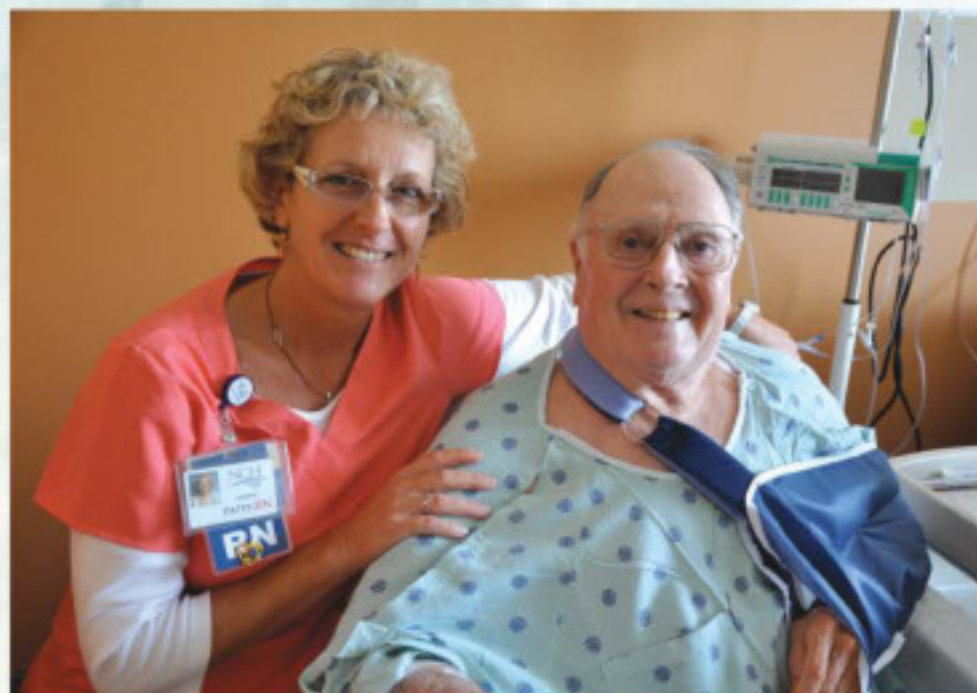
A pain management regimen is then tailored to the patients' needs with medications and non-drug methods.

Medicines are most common in pain treatment after orthopedic surgery.

Moderate to severe pain is best treated with opioids, commonly called narcotics, such as morphine and Dilaudid. Mild to moderate pain is treated with Tylenol and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications, such as Toradol and Motrin.

Non-drug breathing exercises can be added to provide more pain relief.

These include hot or cold compresses and re-positioning techniques, such as elevating the knee. Holistic approaches have also become popular methods to treat pain and provide comfort. Holistic techniques include relaxation with music therapy, the use of aromatherapy oils such as lavender, massage therapy, and the application of healing topical ointments, such as arnica gel which is a natural plant based formula.



Patty Haines with shoulder replacement patient, Richard Schmitz. He rated his pain after the surgery at a 10. However, he said the pain was quickly assessed and treated, using, cold compresses, elevation, anti-inflammatory drugs and other medications.

"Basically, anything that is calming or healing can be used in conjunction with prescribed medications," said Sue Graziano, RN, MSN, ONC, Director of Orthopedics and Acute Care Rehab Unit. "And the interventions that work vary from patient to patient."

Richard Schmitz received his second shoulder replacement June 13. He rated his pain after the surgery at a 10. However, he said the pain was quickly assessed and treated, using cold compresses, elevation, anti-inflammatory drugs and other medications.

"It's not for sissies," Schmitz proclaimed with a laugh. "But they found out what I needed, and it was taken care of very fast. Now I'm pretty comfortable."

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