

Raleigh Hand to Shoulder Center Guide to Pain Control

If you follow these instructions, you can make the recovery easier and keep the pain under control. Many patients can avoid opioid pain medicines if they follow this plan:

1

Rest	Ice	Elevation	Resume routines
Relax, take breaks, and do not overuse the hand or arm for the first 2 days after surgery.	Apply ice to the area 15 minutes at a time. Repeat several times per day as necessary. Avoid ice directly on the skin.	Elevate your hand to the level of your heart or higher to reduce swelling. Prop up the hand on a pillow when sleeping.	Get back into your normal routine as soon as possible.

2

If approved by your primary care physician, purchase the following over-the-counter medications:

- Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) 200 mg
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) 500 mg

For up to 7 days, most adults can take:
 500 mg Tylenol up to 6 doses in 24 hrs
 600 mg Ibuprofen up to 4 doses in 24 hrs

This is a sample dosing schedule:

6 AM	Ibuprofen 600mg
9 AM	Tylenol 500 mg
12 PM	Ibuprofen 600mg
3 PM	Tylenol 500 mg
6 PM	Ibuprofen 600mg
9 PM	Tylenol 500 mg

You may take one extra dose of 500 mg Tylenol and 600 mg Ibuprofen if you wake up in significant pain at night.

Combining Tylenol and Ibuprofen is a case of 1+1 = 3 (NOT 2!). These medications work together to make each other stronger. *** Caution is advised in patients with kidney disease, GI bleeding, liver disease, recent heart procedures, and those who take blood thinners ***

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Did you have a nerve block and your hand is still numb at bedtime? Take Tylenol AND Ibuprofen before going to bed. This will decrease the pain when the numbing medicine wears off.

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If the pain is not controlled with the above plan, take prescription opioids ONLY for severe pain. Some prescription medications are combined with Tylenol: avoid more than 3000 mg of Tylenol in a 24 hour period.

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Surgery and injuries hurt. The worst pain only lasts for the first 48 hours and improves significantly after that. Reduce intake of medications as the pain subsides.

Opioid medication can lead to addiction, problems breathing, and death. In 2022 over 80,000 Americans died from an opioid overdose! Consider stool softener to reduce constipation if you take opioids.