

PAIN AFTER HEART SURGERY

Written by : Hospital Pain Management Team - National Cardiovascular Center Harapan Kita

Pain after surgery is a normal and common thing. Every surgery will certainly provide pain. It sometimes makes patients afraid of to be able to move or mobilize after the surgery.

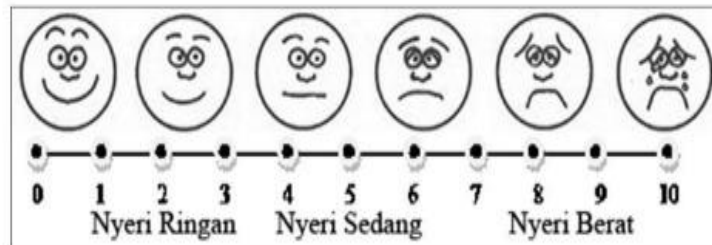
The pain is called post-surgical pain. Post-surgical pain can reduce quality of life and interfere with patient comfort. Some steps can be taken to minimize or alleviate it. However post-surgical pain that worsens when accompanied by other symptoms requires medical treatment.



Post-operative heart pain is often categorized as mild to severe pain (Mueller et al 2000). This pain can be caused by an incision in the chest wall area, installation of a breathing tube, installation of a drain hose to remove blood, fluid or air from the chest cavity, injury to the venous artery in the leg, insertion of an IV tube, installation of a urine catheter (urinary tract) and others. Pain can be felt as a feeling that is annoying and or depressing.

Post-cardiac pain is usually found in the surgical wound area both in the chest wall and in the legs, shoulders, neck and back. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish whether the pain is caused by a surgical wound or pain due to heart problems (angina). If the pain is felt to disappear with a change in position, the pain is not related to activity (does not disappear with activity and occurs continuously), then this pain is usually caused by muscles / bones. But do not hesitate to contact your doctor if this happens, so you will get a more appropriate pain management. The intensity of post-cardiac pain will be high on days 1-3 post-cardiac surgery and decreases until it disappears with increasing time. To help doctors and nurses cope with pain, patients can help by expressing how much pain is felt using the pain scale as shown below.

VAS (Visual Analog Scale) NRS (Numeric Rating Scale)



Skala Nyeri

(Pain Scale)

Tipe Nyeri

(Type of pain)

Pain is categorized into pain with mild degrees (scale 0-4), moderate (scale 4-7) and severe (scale 7-10). Why do doctors or nurses need to know the degree of pain the patient feels? Because the degree of pain complained of, associated with the therapy to be given. Treatment of pain for mild degrees is certainly different from the treatment of severe degree of pain. Doctors and nurses will provide pain medication that is part of the treatment. Pain control medication will accelerate healing and reduce the occurrence of complications

The best post-surgical therapy is the existence of a balance between benefits and risks. If the pain control medication is too strong, it will result in side effects such as drowsiness, nausea and vomiting, impaired kidney and liver function. But if the pain control medication is inadequate, then the patient will still feel pain. The pain that arises will limit the patient's activities including being able to breathe deeply, cough, walk, and perform activities needed to accelerate the healing process. Patient's quality of life will decrease, disability and death rates, and hospital care costs will increase (Tse et al 2005; Apfelbaum et al 2003; Walker and Wagner 2003). The doctor will immediately administer pain medication by injection during and immediately after surgery and until the patient can take pain relievers by mouth. If the patient still feels pain with the treatment given, then do not hesitate to contact a doctor or nurse to be able to overcome the pain. Acute pain that is not handled properly will become chronic pain, pain that will be felt for a long time and treatment will be more difficult to do.

Many people who do not want to take anti-pain medication prescribed by a doctor for reasons of fear of addiction. Actually addictive pain medications are very rare. Even sometimes, not using anti-pain medication is dangerous. Severe pain sometimes makes it difficult for someone to take a deep breath and increase the risk of pneumonia. Pain can also make a person difficult to do daily work, such as walking, eating and sleeping. Even though adequate nutrition and rest are needed to accelerate the wound healing process due to surgery. The effects of heart surgery can interfere with daily actions such as coughing, deep breathing, laughing, sneezing, getting out of bed and even hiccuping. And because most heart surgeries require splitting of the sternum (sternum) to reach the heart so that repair can be done, the sternum and surrounding area need extra support for up to 3 weeks post-surgery. Actions such as hugging a pillow when coughing can reduce the pain of a

surgical wound and help stability of the sternum. In addition to hugging a pillow, there are some things you can do to reduce pain, such as: relaxation, meditation, distractions (watching television, listening to the radio, chatting with family or friends, etc.), understanding information that has been given about pain, or light massage, and body changes.