

PATIENT INFORMATION: PATIENT CONTROLLED ANALGESIA

After surgery, everyone experiences a certain amount of pain. In order to help you to minimize any post-operative discomfort, your doctor has chosen to use a Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA) Pump for you after your operation.

The PCA pump eliminates all the disadvantages of injections and **ALLOWS YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN YOUR OWN PAIN MANAGEMENT.** PCA works by connecting an infusion pump to your intravenous (IV) and is controlled by a button that resembles a call-bell. Each time you start to feel some discomfort you simply push the button and receive a small dose of medication. This medication will start to work in just a few minutes to help relieve your discomfort.

It is well known that patients vary considerably in the amount of pain medication they require to achieve a satisfactory level of comfort post-operatively. The IV PCA pump is able to accommodate this wide range of variability of patient pain medication requirements. The epidural PCA pump provides a continuous pain control but does not give you the option of bolusing yourself with additional pain medication.

Your nurse will show you a picture of the pump if you visit the pre-op clinic or when you are admitted, and will go over

it again with you after surgery. This sheet can be used as an additional guide on the PCA pump.

Here are some frequently asked questions about PCA

WHEN WILL PCA THERAPY BE STARTED?

The PCA pump may be started in the Operating Room (OR) when you are fully awake or may be initiated in PACU (Recovery Room) and the nurse will remind you how to use it. The pump will go to your room with you when you are ready to leave the Recovery Room. If you have an epidural infusion running, you will be cared for in the Enhanced Care Unit for the duration of the infusion.

HOW MUCH MEDICATION WILL I RECEIVE?

Your doctor will prescribe limits to the amount of medication you are to receive to relieve your pain. When you start to feel some discomfort, push and release the button. After allowing 5 -10 minutes for the medication to take effect, if some discomfort still exists, the button may be pushed again. The button may be pushed as often as required in order to make you comfortable enough so that you will be able to cough, deep breath and move with minimal discomfort. Continue to give yourself medication as needed to maintain this level of comfort once you have reached it.

**For health advice or general health information from a Registered Nurse,
call Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000**

CAN I GIVE MYSELF TOO MUCH MEDICATION?

No. The PCA pump is designed so that you cannot give yourself more medication than your doctor thinks is right for you. You cannot over dose yourself; no matter how many times you hit the button. Even the push button control is safe. Rolling over on it when you are asleep won't affect PCA operation. If you become sleepy or drowsy, try to wait a while until you begin to feel definite discomfort before you push the button again.

WHAT IF I START TO FEEL SLEEPY?

The pain medication you'll be receiving has that effect on many people. If you feel sleepy just decrease the number of times you push the PCA button until you feel more awake again.

WHAT IF I BECOME UNCOMFORTABLE?

If your pain medication seems to stop working, even after pushing the button several times and giving the medication a few minutes to work, just call your nurse to check the IV. If you are still uncomfortable after the nurse has checked the IV, your nurse will notify your doctor and your dose will be adjusted as required.

DO I NEED TO STAY IN BED WHEN USING THE PCA INFUSER?

No. You are encouraged to move around with the PCA pump and a nurse will instruct you how to do this as you recover. The pump runs on battery or can be plugged in while you rest.

HOW LONG WILL I BE USING THE PCA PUMP?

That is a decision your doctor will make. Most patients use the PCA pump for up to 48 hours following surgery. Just remember that everyone wants you to be as comfortable as possible.

Things to Remember While using the PCA Pump

DO NOT ask or permit family and friends to push the PCA button for you. It is important that only YOU give yourself the medication when you feel you need it.

The medication will be delivered right away and will start to work in a few minutes; please be patient, give it time to work.

When it is time for the PCA to be stopped you will be switched to oral pain medication. Your nurse will provide medication on request as prescribed.

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