

Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)



Information for patients, their family and carers

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Why is it important to manage my pain after surgery?

It is important to relieve your pain after surgery. Pain relief helps you to be able to move around, take deep breaths and cough when you need to. You will feel better, recover faster and be less likely to have problems.

What type of pain medicine will I be given?

Your Doctor will prescribe you an opioid medicine to help your pain after your surgery. Opioids are a group of pain medicines for severe pain. An example of this type of medicine is Morphine. You will use an opioid medicine for a short time only.

What is Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)?

You will be given a machine so that you can manage your own pain. This is called a Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA) machine. Your Doctor will order the amount of pain medicine to be delivered by the PCA machine when you press a button. This allows you to relieve your pain without having to ask staff for medicines.



Picture 1: A PCA machine.

How often do I press the PCA button?

Press the button when you start to feel pain. Do not wait until the pain is very strong.

The PCA machine has a limit on the number of doses it can deliver at any time. After you have pressed the button, you need to wait about 5 minutes to feel the effect of the medicine. By then the next dose will be available and you can press the button again if you still have pain.

Press the button before any activities that could cause pain such as physiotherapy or getting out of bed.

Can I overdose?

A nurse will program the machine according to the Doctor's instructions so you cannot give yourself too much medicine. If you use it a lot you may feel sleepy. Nobody else is allowed to press the button, so you will not get any more pain medicine while you sleep. Your nurse will do regular checks on you.

Can I become addicted?

You will only use this medicine for a short time so it is unlikely you will become addicted to the medicine.

Are there any side effects?

Some patients may experience sleepiness, nausea, itching or difficulty in passing urine or opening bowels. These side effects can be treated. Please let your nurse or doctor know if you are having any of these side effects.

What if I continue to have pain?

If you are using the PCA machine and continue to have pain. Speak with your nurse or doctor.

How can I find out more information?

Ask your nurse any further questions you may have. They will also regularly check how you are.

