



Information for patients
and carers

PCA

Patient Controlled Analgesia

Your Questions Answered

What is Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)?

Patient Controlled Analgesia will allow you to control the amount of pain medicine (analgesia) you receive.

What are the advantages of PCA?

The main advantage is that you are in control and you will not have to wait for a nurse to prepare a pain medicine for you. The pain medicine is given through a small tube in your arm rather than traditional injections. In general, experience has shown that patients using PCA will need smaller amounts of pain medicine to control their pain and suffer from less side effects. Patient satisfaction is higher with PCA when compared with conventional methods.

How does it work?

You will be connected to a device via an intravenous line which contains a supply of pain medication, normally morphine or oxycodone. When you begin to feel pain you press the button on the handset, which is connected to the device.

The device will beep to confirm you have pressed the button properly; this will then administer a dose of the pain medicine. The PCA machine allows you to control your pain and discomfort.

Does the machine always give pain medicine when I press the button?

No. The device is programmed to allow you a dose every five minutes after pressing the button, in order that one dose has had time to work before another dose is given

When will I start using the PCA?

Following surgery you will be able to start using the PCA when you wake up from your operation. The device will be set up for you when you are in the recovery area of theatre (or occasionally on the ward). The PCA device will accompany you back to your ward.

Following your accident it may be advised for you to have a PCA.

How often should I press the button?

You should aim to use it to keep yourself comfortable with minimal side effects. You should not wait for pain to build up before pressing the button. You should use the PCA in order to be able to:

- move around in bed comfortably,
- take deep breaths and be able to cough.
- go for short walk on your ward

People vary enormously. No comparisons should be made as to how much pain medicine is needed between patients. It is not brave or sensible to put up with a lot of pain. Research has shown that good pain relief actually helps you get better faster after your operation. As your recovery progresses your needs will alter. Paracetamol will be given regularly whilst you are on the PCA. Even though paracetamol is a mild pain medicine, it works very well and will improve the effect of the pain medicine in the PCA.

Can my relative or friend press the PCA for me?

No. Friends and family members must not press the button for you. This can be very dangerous and cause you to have too much pain medicine and may lead to your experiencing unwanted and harmful side effects.

Will the nurses still check on me regularly?

Yes. They will want to find out how effective the PCA is for you. At regular intervals they will assess you and ask you how comfortable you feel. A member of the Inpatient Pain Team will also visit you whilst you are using PCA.

Can I leave the ward with a PCA?

Patients can only leave the ward with a PCA in situ if accompanied by a member of staff – e.g. be taken down to X-ray or for a medical intervention. Patients are otherwise not allowed to leave the ward whilst connected to the PCA as the pain medicines used are controlled drugs.

Will I become addicted?

No. Addiction is not a problem when you are taking pain medicine to treat pain after an operation for a few days.

What are the likely side effects to the pain medicine?

The pain medicine (analgesic) used in the PCA, may make you feel sickly, sleepy or occasionally itchy. If any of these side effects occur let your nurse know straight away as these symptoms can be treated and controlled.

Can I overdose myself?

Patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) has built-in safety features that protect you from giving yourself too large a dose or too many doses. The device is programmed so you can only receive one dose every five minutes. Each individual dose is too small to cause an overdose. The drug will make you drowsy and you will go to sleep if too much is taken. When you are sleeping you won't be pressing the button, therefore you won't be receiving any more medication. As long as you are the only one who presses the button, it is highly unlikely that you will overdose yourself.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please ask your ward nurses, pharmacist, doctors or the Inpatient Pain Team, who will be able to give you further information about your pain relief.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk

<https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/faculty-of-pain-medicine/opioids-aware>

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Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Cantonese:

如果你希望以另外一種格式接收該資訊，請和我們聯絡，不必猶豫。

Gujarati:

જો તમને આ માહિતી બીજી રચના કે ફોર્મેટમાં મેળવવાની ઈચ્છા હોય, તો કૃપા કરી અમારો સંપર્ક કરતા અચકાશો નહિ.

Hungarian:

Kérjük, vegye fel velünk a kapcsolatot, ha más formában kéri ezt az információt.

Polish:

Jeżeli chciał(a)by Pan/Pani otrzymać niniejsze informacje w innym formacie, prosimy o kontakt.

Punjabi:

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਵਿਚ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਨਾ ਝਿਜਕੋ।

Urdu:

اگر آپ اس معلومات کو کسی اور صورت میں حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کرنے میں ہچکچاہٹ محسوس نہ کریں۔

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On 31 May 2017 Lancashire Teaching Hospitals became a smoke-free organisation. From that date smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking including Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal.

If you want to stop smoking you can also contact the Quit Squad Freephone 0800 328 6297.

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