



Information for
patients and
carers

**Remifentanil Patient Controlled
Analgesia (PCA) for Labour**

This leaflet gives you information about the use of Remifentanil for the management of pain during labour. This medication is given using a Patient Controlled Analgesic (PCA) pump.

All women who are more than 37 weeks pregnant can request Remifentanil for pain relief in labour. Remifentanil is however most commonly offered to women who cannot have an epidural. This may be because they have had back surgery, have a bleeding disorder such as a low platelet count or because it has not been possible to site an epidural.

There are women who may not be able to have a Remifentanil PCA and this will be discussed by the anaesthetist and midwife looking after you.

What is Remifentanil?

Remifentanil is a strong but short acting medication which has been shown to reduce the severity of labour pain. It is in the same family as Diamorphine and Pethidine which can also be used for pain relief in labour. It has a number of advantages over Diamorphine and Pethidine injections.

- Diamorphine and Pethidine are injected into muscle and can take about 15 to 20 minutes to take effect, but Remifentanil is much faster-acting, because it is given intravenously (directly into a blood vessel)
- Diamorphine and Pethidine remain in the body for several hours and cross the placenta into the baby's bloodstream. Babies are unable to quickly break down Diamorphine and Pethidine to remove it from their bodies and, as a result, they can be drowsy at birth and slow to establish adequate breathing movements. In contrast, Remifentanil is rapidly broken down naturally in the body by both adults and babies and therefore it is less likely to have this effect

What is a Remifentanil PCA?

The pain relieving effect of Remifentanil comes on very quickly and also wears off very quickly meaning it can be timed with each contraction to provide effective pain relief. A small dose is given by pressing a button, connected to a special pump, which is attached to a cannula (drip) in your hand. The effect of Remifentanil starts about 30-90 seconds after pressing the button therefore, it is best to press the button immediately at the start of a contraction. You can press the button every 2 minutes. The PCA pump has a safety pause (lock out time) for 2 minutes where you can press the button but you won't receive a dose.

It can take a little while to coordinate pressing the button in time with your contractions. If you need to you may also use Entonox (gas and air) at the same time as a Remifentanil PCA. You will be continuously monitored and you will need to have oxygen using soft plastic prongs which sit in the nose.

Are there any unwanted effects of Remifentanil?

Some women can feel very sleepy especially in between contractions but this wears off very quickly if you don't press the button. For this reason you must be monitored with a heart rate monitor, blood pressure and continuous oxygen monitor which is a peg which sits on your finger or ear lobe. Itchiness, nausea and vomiting can also occur. Remifentanil has been shown to be safe for babies, but extremely rarely can cause their heart rate and breathing to slow. We would advise women with an allergy or intolerance to morphine type drugs to discuss this with the anaesthetist before starting a Remifentanil PCA.

You should be aware that some women do not find Remifentanil effective and some women find the unwanted effects of sleepiness and nausea too unpleasant to continue using the pump. If this is the case then an alternative form of pain relief will be offered and the pump will

be stopped and removed. These unwanted effects will disappear in about 10-20 minutes.

When can I ask for Remifentanyl?

You can request Remifentanyl at any time during labour as long as you have not had any Pethidine or Diamorphine in the previous 4 hours. For some patients a Remifentanyl PCA will not be suitable and your midwife and the anaesthetist covering delivery suite will talk to you more about this if needed.

Making the decision to use Remifentanyl

If you have any further questions, or are still undecided, you can ask to see an anaesthetist when you are admitted to hospital for your baby's birth.

A Lancashire Teaching Hospitals Information Video is also available via <https://vimeo.com/525496696>

Sources of further information

www.labourpains.com

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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

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

Gujarati:

આ માહિતીને સમજવામાં સહાયતા જોઈતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને પૂછો. આ માહિતી મોટા છપાણ માં અને અન્ય ભાષામાં ઉપલબ્ધ કરી શકાય છે.

Romanian:

Vă rugăm să întrebați dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru înțelegerea acestor informații. Aceste informații pot fi puse la dispoziție în format mare și în alte limbi.”

Polish:

Poinformuj nas, jeśli potrzebna jest ci pomoc w zrozumieniu tych informacji. Informacje te można również udostępnić dużym drukiem oraz w innych językach

Punjabi:

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਸਮਝਣ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮਦਦ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੋਗੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਪੁੱਛੋ। ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਪ੍ਰਿੰਟ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮੁਹੱਈਆ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।

Urdu:

دو سر ی زبانوں او ر بڑی اگر آپ کو ہی معلومات سمجھنے کے لیے مدد کی ضرورت ہے تو ییچھپیا یں یبھ ابی دست بو یسکت ہے برا ئے مہر یبان بو یچھہ ہی۔ معلومات

Arabic:

مطبوعه بأ حرف كبير ة و بلغات إذا كنت تريد مساعدة في فهم هذه لمعلومات ير جى أن تطلب آخرى يمكن تو فسير هذه المعلومات

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