

Side Effects of Pain Medication

Most patients receive pain medication via intravenous (IV) in the opioid narcotic category. These medications can cause some of the following side effects:

- You may experience nausea or have a “queasy” stomach
- You may become mildly constipated
- You may have some difficulty passing urine
- You may have slight confusion
- You may find your skin itches
- You might experience a sense of breathing slowly



Let your nurse and doctor know if you experience any of the side effects listed above.

Advantages to PCA

- No injections (shots).
- Immediate and effective relief of pain.
- No waiting for the nurse to give you pain medication.
- PCA works faster than a pill or an injection because the medication is released directly into your bloodstream.
- You have control over how much or how little pain medication you receive.
- You will probably feel better faster because your pain will be adequately controlled and you'll feel more like your usual self.
- You will probably need less pain medication.
- Your nurse will check at regular intervals to make certain the system is providing adequate pain control. Changes in the dose may be made as necessary.
- You can take control of your pain relief.

Safe and Effective Pain Control



A Guide to Patient-Controlled Analgesia

WHAT IS PCA?

Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA) is a way for patients to self deliver pain medication on a continual basis. This means that you the patient can have control over your own pain relief.

Pain medication is delivered through a device called an infusion pump. Attached to the pump is a medication delivery system, which allows the exact amount of medication ordered by the doctor to be released into the patient's system. (This is just one example of a patient controlled analgesia (PCA) pump. The pump may be by a different manufacturer or a different model.)



This allows you the patient to receive medication for pain relief whenever it is needed. The infusion pump is programmed with safety features so that you do not get too much medication. If you have reached the maximum amount of medication ordered for you, you will not be able to push the button. This is because the pump will deliver only the amount of medication prescribed by your doctor. The total number of doses is kept within a safe limit. You cannot take more medicine than your doctor has prescribed.

WHY USE PCA?

The term "analgesia" simply means relief from pain. Patient controlled analgesia means that you, the patient, participates in the relief of your pain by controlling how much or how little pain medication you receive.

PCA is most often ordered after surgery to control pain and provide the best relief possible, but PCA can also be ordered for other types of pain than postoperative pain. If you have a disease or condition that causes you considerable pain and your doctor thinks a PCA pump will be the best way to manage your pain, you may order PCA for you.

An important thing to remember with PCA is that only you as the patient (or your nurse), should press the medication delivery button. Do not allow your friends or family to press the medication delivery button for you. This could cause you to become over-sedated and this could have an undesirable effect on you and your recovery.

Remember, the doctor will order PCA for you if he or she feels this is the best way to meet your pain management needs. The infusion pump will be programmed to allow a dosage of medication that is best suited to provide comfort without risk of overmedicating yourself. The delivery button will be placed where you can easily find it. The big advantage of PCA is to get relief without painful shots.



PCA SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

- You, the patient, are the only person other than your nurse who should push the medication delivery button. Family and friends should NOT push the button for you.

The PCA infusion pump will be attached to your person via an intravenous line. This means where you go, the pump will go. Make sure you notify your nurse if you want to get out of bed and walk around. He or she will most likely need to unplug the pump (pumps can run on batteries as well as electricity) for you so that you can move about.

- If you feel confused, dizzy, weak or disoriented do not try and get out of bed without help. Call the nurse to assist you. Do not rely on friends or family to get you out of bed if you feel this way. Again, call the nurse for help before trying to get out of bed.
- If you feel very groggy or very sleepy do not try to push the medication delivery button, you must be awake. You will fall asleep and will not receive additional pain medication until you are feeling this way.

If you are feeling very drowsy or sleepy you should not try to eat or drink. Wait until you are more awake before eating and drinking.

- Inform your nurse or doctor if you are feeling any of the side effects listed in this brochure.