

Patient controlled analgesia (PCA) for older children

(Eastern services)

Other formats

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- 01392 402093 (for Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter services)
- 01271 314090 (for North Devon services)
- rduh.pals@nhs.net

Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)

A PCA is sometimes given to patients after a certain operation. A PCA maybe recommended to you by your anaesthetist (doctor who looks after you while you are asleep during your operation). . When you wake up from your operation, a PCA will be set up by the nursing staff.

The PCA pump

The PCA pump contains pain relieving opioids, which you will receive when you press the button on the handset. The opioids then goes, via the line in your hand known as an intravenous drip.

Safety measures

Only a set amount of medicine will be given to you via the PCA pump at any one time. For safety, the doctors work out this amount according to your age and weight.

Whenever you have pain, you should press the button on your handset. There is then a 5-minute break before you will be able to use the pump again and receive more medicine. This is known as a lock-out period and is a safety measure to stop you from having too much medicine.

Benefits of PCA

PCA means you have greater control over your pain relief because you do not have to wait for the nurses to give you medicine. Although the nurses will give you oral medication in addition to your PCA to keep you comfortable.

Medicines used in PCA

An opioid medication, such as morphine, will be given via the PCA (see page 3). Other medications that may be used are listed further on in this leaflet.

Side effects of PCA medicines

- **Nausea** - please tell your nurse if you feel sick. We can give you medicine for this problem if it does not go away.
- **Itching** - please tell your nurse/doctor, if you have any itching.
- **Sedation** - Some drowsiness can be normal, so please do not worry. If drowsiness is a problem, we can give you less medication, which will help. We will give you other medicines for pain relief to make sure you are as comfortable as possible.
- **Respiratory depression**, or slowing down of breathing, is the most serious side effect of opioid medicines. For this reason, your nurse will check on you frequently while you are having opioids to make sure this is not a problem. There is a medicine available to give to you if you do experience abnormal breathing. This is known as an antidote and makes using this type of medicine safer.

Your doctor will be happy to discuss these and any other possible side effects of PCA medicines with you and your parents.

While you have a PCA and for a short time after it has been removed, you will probably be visited by one of our Pain Management Specialist Nurses. The Pain Management Specialists are there to work with you and the ward staff to make sure you are as comfortable as possible.

We hope this leaflet is of some help to you. If there is anything else we can do to help make your stay more comfortable, please let us know.

Pain glossary

- **Acute pain** - short term pain (under 3 months).
- **Analgesia** - pain relieving medicine.
- **Anti-emetics** - anti-sickness medicine.
- **Chronic pain** - long term pain (over 3 months).
- **Intra-muscular medication (IM)** - injection into a muscle.
- **Intra-venous medication (IV)** - injection into a vein.

- **Oral medication** - medicine given in the mouth.
- **Sub-cutaneous medication (S/C)** - injection into the skin tissue.
- **Laxatives** - medicine to relieve constipation.
- **Per-rectum medication (PR)** - medicine given into the patient's back passage.

Different pain medicines

- Paracetamol - oral/IV pain medicine for milder pain. Side effects are rare at recommended doses.
- Ibuprofen - oral pain medicine, works well with paracetamol. Occasionally causes breathing difficulties in patients with asthma. Can cause tummy aches, dizziness or rashes.
- Diclofenac - strong oral/PR pain medicine similar to ibuprofen but stronger. Cannot be given at the same time as ibuprofen. Side effects as for ibuprofen.
- Tramadol - strong oral medicine that can be given in an injection if needed. It is recommended for moderate pain and is sometimes given with a PCA. Tramadol tends to be used in older children only. It can cause sickness and dizziness.

Your notes

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern, please contact PALS:

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