

# Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA) for Children

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## Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)

PCA is often given to patients after they have had a major operation. If this type of pain relief is a good idea for your child, the anaesthetist (doctor who cares for your child during their operation) will discuss this and your child will wake up from their operation connected to a PCA pump.

## The PCA pump

The PCA pump contains pain relieving medicine, which your child will receive when they press a button on a special handset. The medicine then goes into your child's intravenous drip.

## Safety measures

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

Whenever your child has pain, they should press the button on the handset. There is then a 5-minute break before your child 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 so that your child does not receive too much medicine.

**Please do not press the button on your child's handset for them. If your child is unable to press the button, then a small infusion of pain medicine can be given from the pump. The nurses will also be able to press the button prior to moving your child or if your child is in pain.**

## Benefits of PCA

PCA means your child has greater control over their pain relief because they do not have to wait for the nurses to give them medicine.

## Medicines used in PCA

Generally morphine or a similar medicine is used in PCA. To try to improve your child's comfort even further, other pain relieving medicine is usually given to your child on a regular basis (*see page 2*).

## Side effects of PCA medicines

Sometimes your child will experience side effects from the medicine used in PCA.

- **Sickness** - we can give your child medicine for this problem if it persists.
- **Itching** - again, we can give your child medicine to help with this.
- **Drowsiness** - this is normal so please do not worry. If sleepiness is a problem however, we can reduce the amount of PCA medicine your child has, which will help. We will then use other medicines to make your child as comfortable as possible.
- **Respiratory depression**, or slowing down of breathing, is the most serious side effect of opioid medicines. For this reason your child's nurse will check on them frequently while they are having opiates to make sure this is not a problem. There is a medicine available to give to your child if they do experience abnormal breathing. This is known as an antidote and makes using this type of medicine safer.

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

**Your child will not become addicted to this pain relieving medicine as a result of using it for a short time for their pain.**

While your child has a PCA and for a short time after it has been stopped, they will probably be visited by one of our pain management nurses. These nurses are there to work with you, your child and the ward staff to make sure your child is 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 child's stay more comfortable, please let us know.

## Pain glossary

- **Acute pain** - short term pain.
- **Analgesia** - pain relieving medicine.
- **Anti-emetics** - anti-sickness medicine.
- **Chronic pain** - long term pain.
- **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/PR/IV pain medicine for milder pain. Side effects are rare, except liver damage in overdose.
- **Ibuprofen** - oral pain medicine, works well with paracetamol. Occasionally causes breathing difficulties in patients with asthma. Please mention if your child has 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 bad pain and tends to be used in older children only. It can cause sickness and dizziness.

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