

Local Anesthetic Pain Relief Pump

After surgery, you may have a pain relief pump. It uses a local anesthetic (numbing medicine) to lessen pain at the surgery site. This pump delivers an ongoing flow of medicine directly to one of two areas:

- Your incision site
- The nerves that lead to the site

Most patients who have a pain relief pump have less pain. As a result, patients may:

- Use less pain medicine
- Be more alert
- Have fewer medication side-effects (nausea, constipation)
- Recover faster

The pain relief pump has 3 main parts: a very thin tube (catheter) attached to a small container by a larger plastic tube. Pain medicine flows from the container to the catheter. The thin catheter, which has many tiny holes (like a garden “soaker” hose) is placed during surgery. After the incision is closed, the catheter is attached to a pump. The catheter is held in place by a clear dressing and tape. A belt with a small pouch supports the pump and the tubing.

The pump provides ongoing pain medicine over the next 48 to 72 hours, depending on the type of pump you have. Along with oral pain medicine, the pump should make you comfortable and relieve most of your pain. This will allow you to perform tasks to aid your recovery such as therapy, deep breathing or coughing.

It is important to be aware that the surgery site may be numb. Depending on the site, you may need help getting out of bed and walking. If your leg is numb, you must have help to avoid a fall. Also, extra care should be taken to avoid putting pressure on the numbed area.

If you have questions or concerns please talk with your doctor or nurse.

As always, please tell your nurse or doctor if you are having pain not controlled by the pump.

Extra Dose Option (Bolus)

Some pain relief pumps have a button that allows you to give yourself an extra dose (bolus) of medicine if the pain is severe. After the dose is given, the bolus option locks for a period of time. The lock time varies with each pump. During this time, you will not be able to give yourself extra medicines even if you press the button. This safety feature:

- Allows time for the medicine to work
- Prevents you from receiving unneeded doses

After the time period is up, the pump unlocks and allows you to give yourself more medication if you still have pain.

The pain relief pump is intended for patient use only. Family members or visitors should never press the button without your consent. When someone other than you presses the button, they may be placing you at risk for giving you too much or unnecessary medicine.

Getting Ready to Go Home

Some patients go home with the pump still in place. Once all the medicine in the container is gone, the pump and the catheter can be removed. After the pump is removed, oral pain medicines still may be used.

Before you go home, your nurse will explain all guidelines for discharge. This will include details about the pain relief pump, including:

- How to remove the catheter
- Care of the pump
- Bolus use (if a pump option)
- Special safety measures
- When the pump is empty

If you have any questions, please talk with your nurse or doctor.

At Home

Guidelines

It is important to follow your doctor's discharge guidelines. Even if you are pain free, do not do any of the following until you have your doctor's approval:

- Driving
- Heavy lifting
- Strenuous exercise

While the pain relief pump is in place, do not shower or take a tub bath. Always support the tube and pump when the belt and pouch are not in place. Do not disconnect the tubing or catheter from the pump.

The pain relief pump catheter site should be covered with a dressing. There is no need to change that dressing unless it falls off or becomes soiled.

Taking Care

It is important to know that the surgery site will be numb. Avoid injury and protect the area:

- Seek help or use devices (canes, etc.), as needed, when walking or changing positions
- Avoid exposure to extreme temperatures
- Do not use a heating pad
- Avoid pressure, such as tight clothing

While the pump and catheter are in place, talk with your doctor before having an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) test.

Removing the Catheter

If instructed by your doctor, you may remove the pump catheter once the pain medicine in the pump is used up.

Follow these steps:

1. Gather supplies:
 - 5 cotton swabs and isopropyl alcohol or 5 alcohol wipes
 - Band-Aid® or a small gauze dressing and tape
 - A small plastic garbage bag
2. Wash your hands carefully with soap and water for 15 to 30 seconds.
3. Remove the dressings or tape holding the catheter or plastic tube in place. Use care not to remove other dressing or drainage tubes that you may have unless otherwise instructed by your doctor.
4. Firmly grasp the catheter as close as you can to the incision site
5. Gently pull on the catheter to remove. It should come out easily. If it does not, stop and re-tape the catheter and secure the pump. Then, contact your doctor.
6. Once the catheter is out, you may note some clear drainage at the site. Clean the site with a cotton swab dipped in alcohol or an alcohol wipe. Repeat if needed.
7. Cover with a Band-Aid® or clean gauze dressing and secure with tape.

8. Check the catheter tip to make sure it is not broken. The tip end is marked by either black or blue color.
- If intact and the marking is present, place the pump and catheter and tubing in a plastic bag. Seal the bag and discard; keep it away from children and pets. Wash your hands carefully.
 - If there is no marking at the tip, place the pump and catheter and tubing in a plastic bag. Wash your hands and contact your doctor. Do not discard the plastic bag. Your doctor may wish to examine the catheter and pain pump.
 - If you have a pain pump that contains a battery, discard the pump as you would any battery. Follow local guidelines to identify proper disposal centers.

When to Call the Doctor

Contact your doctor if:

- The tube becomes disconnected
- The catheter falls out of the incision site or medicine is soaking through dressing. (You may note a small amount of leakage where the catheter enters the skin. This is normal.)
- You have uncontrolled severe pain
- There is any redness, unusual or excessive warmth, pain, swelling, drainage that is not clear or bleeding near the catheter site

Health Information Resources

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women's Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to hlc@nmh.org.

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at www.nmh.org.

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