

Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)

Your doctor has suggested patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) as a method of controlling your pain. A PCA allows you to give yourself small doses of pain medicine IV (into the vein). The pain medicine most commonly used in a PCA is morphine. If you are allergic to morphine, other medicine can be used. Most patients using a PCA find that they have better control and faster relief of their pain. Patients often use less pain medication and feel more alert.

The PCA pump is attached to your IV line. The PCA pump has a cord with a button. When you have pain and press the button, the ordered dose of pain medicine flows into your IV line. After the dose is given, the PCA pump locks for a short period. During this time, you will not be able to give yourself more pain medicine even if you press the button. This safety feature allows the medicine time to work and prevents you from receiving unnecessary doses. After this time period is up, the PCA pump unlocks and allows you to give yourself more medicine if you still have pain.

The PCA should make you comfortable and relieve most of your pain. This will allow you to perform tasks to aid your recovery, such as therapy or deep breathing exercises.

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

The pain medicine you are receiving may make you a little sleepy, but this effect often decreases with time. If you have itching or nausea, please tell your doctor or nurse, since medicine is available to relieve these side effects.

*Pain control
is an important
part of your care.*

Most surgery patients stay on the PCA pump for a few days or until they are on a clear liquid diet. Once you are able to eat, the PCA pump is removed and you will take oral medicine for pain relief.

As always, please tell your doctor or nurse if you are having pain not controlled by the PCA or if you have any other questions or concerns.

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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Developed by: Anesthesia, Pain Management Services with the Department of Pharmacy

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