

PATIENT CONTROLLED ANALGESIA (PCA)

Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA) uses a pump that allows you to take control of your own pain relief. You can give yourself a small dose of Morphine painlessly, by pressing the button on the handset.

It is injected directly through a plastic tube (cannula) which is inserted into a vein, usually on your arm or hand.

If you have PCA, it should be clearly explained to you, before your operation, by the ward nurse who is caring for you. When you wake up from the operation the machine will be there ready to use.

Do not allow children or other visitors to press the button on the handset.

Relieving your pain

You cannot become addicted to morphine as a result of using the machine during the short period after your operation.

When you feel pain, you should press the button on the handset. It will start to work within minutes. The machine is set deliver a small amount of pain killer each time you press the button.

It is set so that once a small amount of pain killer is delivered, no more can be given within a pre-set time limit of five minutes, even if you press the button again. Therefore it is highly unlikely that you overdose as a result of using the machine.

To make the best use of PCA, it is advisable to press the button about five minutes before moving, such as sitting up in bed, getting out of bed, deep breathing or coughing.

If you are still in pain, let the nurses know so they can adjust the amount of pain relief you receive as it is important to keep yourself comfortable.

You will normally use the PCA for two to three days after your operation. After this time, if you feel pain we will give you pain relief, usually tablets. The nurse will discuss this with you.

Side effects of pain killing drugs

They may include one or more of the following:

- tiredness
- light-headedness
- dizziness
- sickness
- itchiness
- constipation.

If you are affected, tell the nurse as other medicines can be given to help these problems. Other pain killers can be given by mouth or as a suppository, at the same time as using the PCA, so that you can reduce the amount of morphine you take which will reduce the side effect.

Please note - occasionally you may still have pain in spite of making full use of the PCA. Remember, the machine is pre-set to be safe for everyone.

Some patients will need more pain killer and some will need less. Everybody's pain is different.

If you are in pain do not hesitate to tell the ward staff. They will contact the doctor or a nurse from the pain management service to come and see you.