

You may be given oxygen-enriched air through a mask or nasal prongs. This is for your safety.

Will I have to stay in bed?

No. Generally after a big operation you will be helped to sit out of bed the next day. It is essential that you are comfortable enough to do so - if not please let someone know.

The pump can be unplugged to run on batteries but you will not be able to leave the ward while attached to the pump.

How long will I have the PCA?

PCA is usually stopped after 1 to 5 days. Alternative pain relievers are prescribed as tablets. You may need to ask your nurse for these.

Points to remember

If you are unable to cough because of pain please let your nurse or doctor know. Supporting your wound with a

pillow when you cough can help.

Analgesia is the medical term for pain relief

Opioids is the general name given to the group of drugs that include morphine

Paracetamol (*Panadol*) is a particularly effective pain-reliever when given together with other medication. Do not miss any doses.

Constipation is a common problem with all strong pain-relievers. Make sure you take something to prevent this as soon as you start using the PCA.

If you have any worries, or problems with your pain medicines, discuss these with your nurse or doctor.



National Standard 2: Partnering with Consumers
Patients provided feedback on this publication.



The Acute Pain Management Service

Department of Anaesthesia and
Perioperative Medicine
Royal Brisbane & Women's Hospital

Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)

Breaking the Pain Barrier

Your pain relief in hospital



What is PCA?

PCA is a method that allows you to decide when you need more pain relief and then to give it to yourself.

Instead of ringing for a nurse when you need pain relief, you press the button attached to a pump, which delivers the pain relief straight into your body.

How does PCA Work?

The amount of medicine delivered each time you push the button is prescribed by the doctor and will be based on several factors such as your age and type of surgery.

The drug is delivered immediately and it works very quickly. You may experience a rushing sensation as the dose is delivered. If you are still in pain after a few minutes you may press the button again.

How often should I press the button?

You can press the button whenever you have pain, day and night.

Before undertaking an activity such as getting out of bed, or having physiotherapy, you may wish to prepare by using the button in advance.

Who can push the button?

As you are the only one who can feel the pain, *you* should be the only one to push the button.

*It is **dangerous** for your family or other visitors to push the button for you.*

Can I use it too much?

No. To make this system safe, a *minimum time* is programmed between each successful delivery of pain relief (this is called the “lock-out”). This ensures that the medication has time to work before a further dose is given. No matter how much you push the button, no further medication will be delivered until the lock-out time has passed.

Can I become addicted?

Research shows that it is extremely rare for addiction to occur with short-term use of opioids when taken for significant pain.

What are the side effects?

Opioids can cause -

- Drowsiness. If you feel too drowsy, do not press the button.
- Nausea and vomiting

- Constipation
- Itching
- Difficulty passing urine

Please let your nurse know as soon as you experience any of these. They can usually be easily treated.

Can this machine electrocute me?

No. There is no way you can be electrocuted by the machine. You are very unlikely to break the machine.

How can I get the best results from PCA?

You should push your button until you feel comfortable enough to cough and move around as much as you are allowed to. ***It is important that you have good pain relief.***

If your pain is poorly controlled you will not want to move about and this increases the chance of problems resulting from your surgery / operation.

Unrelieved pain can strain your heart and stop you taking deep breaths and coughing. This will slow down your healing.