



Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)

What is Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)

PCA stands for patient- controlled analgesia. Analgesia means relief of pain. With PCA, you can give your own medicine and get pain control without injections

How does the PCA work?

The PCA pump is a machine with a supply of pain medicine that has been ordered by your doctor and is attached to your IV (intravenous) pole. Your pain medicine is given to you through your IV tubing.

The pump is set so that when you push the button, a small amount of medicine goes into your blood stream for quick pain relief. You can give yourself these small, controlled doses several times an hour, if needed.

Is the pump safe for my Baby and Me?

Be assured that your doctor will order pain medicine only in the amounts and during those stages of labour that are best for your safety and the well-being of your baby.

There are safety controls in the pump that do not let you give yourself too much medicine. You will not get an overdose. If you push the button too often, the pump will not deliver any medicine unless the set amount of time has passed. The total amount of medicine you can give yourself is safely limited. No one else may push the button for you.

Are there side effects?

Some people have some nausea, slower breathing, or itching from their pain medicine. Your nurse will be with you and check you often to see if you are comfortable and whether you are having any problems. Some babies show signs of sleepiness immediately after birth – your nurse will closely monitor baby during this time.

What should I do if I have a lot of pain?

You may need to push the button more often. Let your nurse know that you are not comfortable. Your nurse will check the IV line and the pump to be sure they are working. If changes in your medicine are needed, the nurse will call your doctor.

What are the advantages of the PCA pump?

- You do not have to wait for the nurse to bring your pain medicine
- You will not need shots for pain
- You may feel more in control for your pain
- PCA works more quickly than shots
- Studies show that patients using PCA pumps usually need less pain medicine