

Patient-Controlled Analgesia

What Is Patient-Controlled Analgesia (PCA)?

PCA stands for Patient-Controlled Analgesia. Analgesia means relief of pain. With PCA you can get pain control without injections.

How Does PCA Work?

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

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

Is the Pump Safe for My Baby and Me?

Be assured that your doctor will order pain medicine only in safe amounts 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. 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 administer to yourself is safely limited and it is important that only **you** operate the handheld device.

Are There Side Effects?

In some cases, people will experience nausea, slower breathing, or itching from their pain medicine. Your nurse will be with you ensuring you are comfortable and that you are not having any problems. Some babies show signs of sleepiness immediately after birth – your nurse will closely monitor your baby during this time.

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 of your pain;
- PCA works more quickly than shots; and
- PCA may be an option prior to an epidural.