

## What is patient controlled analgesia (PCA)?

- PCA is a way for you to give yourself pain medicine when you feel you need it. PCA allows you to get pain medicine without having repeated injections.
- The syringe is filled with an opioid (example: morphine, Oxynorm), a painkiller which is very effective in relieving pain after an operation.

## What are the benefits of PCA?

- Feeling pain after an operation is completely normal. Keeping your pain under control after your operation will allow you to take deep breaths and cough to keep your chest clear.
- PCA will allow you to have control over how and when your pain is treated. You do not have to wait for healthcare providers to give you medicine.
- A PCA may better control your pain and keep you alert and awake. You may be able to start moving around sooner. This may help prevent blood clots from forming, and help you heal faster.
- These activities will help you recover from your operation as quickly as possible.

## What are the risks of PCA?

- The pain medicine given in the PCA may cause: nausea, itchy skin, or trouble urinating and constipation. Pain medicine may make you breathe less deeply or stop breathing.
- Healthcare providers will watch you closely to help prevent or treat these problems.

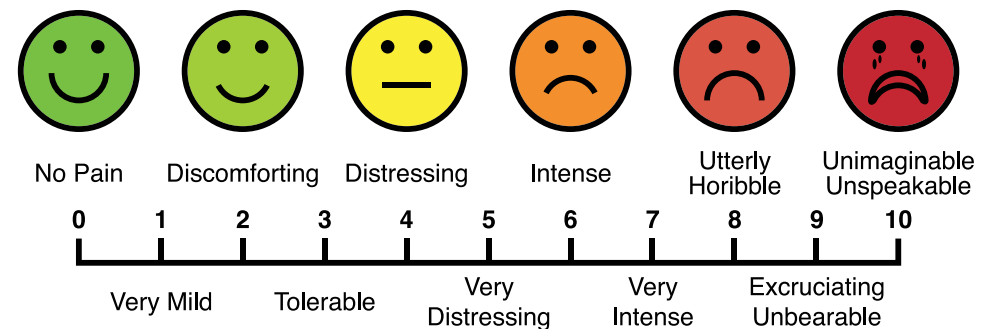
## How does PCA work?

- The PCA is a pump attached to a syringe filled with pain medicine. Healthcare providers will insert an IV into your vein. The PCA pump and syringe will be connected to your IV.

- When the green light glows on the handset, you can give yourself some pain killer.
- Press the button often that you can comfortably move around in bed and take deep breaths.
- The PCA pump is built to make sure you do not get too much pain medicine. The machine has a lockout period that prevents you from getting a dose of medicine too soon. You may push the button many times, but the pump will only give you a set amount of medicine.
- You should use it 2-3 times before you do something active like getting out of bed or having physiotherapy.
- PCA will be used until your pain can be controlled with pain pills.

## How to get the best from your PCA?

- The pump will be attached to a pole beside your bed. Ask the nurses if you are not sure how to use the pump.
- The nurses will come to check the pump regularly and ask you about your pain. They will ask you to give the pain you feel a number ranging from 0–10.
- 0 would equal no pain and 10 would be the worst pain you have felt. They will also ask if you feel sick.
- You should tell the nurses if you don't feel well or if your pain does not get better after you press the button.



## Safety precautions:

- **Do not let anyone push the button for you.** Tell everyone who visits you not to push the button. You could get more medicine than you need if the person pushes the button. Tell visitors that you will push the button when you need more pain medicine.
- **Tell your healthcare provider if you are still uncomfortable a few minutes after you push the button.** Your provider may be able to give you extra pain medicine. He may also change how often you can get a dose of medicine or your dose amount.
- **Press the call button and ask for help before you get out of bed.** Pain medicine might make you weak, dizzy, or less aware. This can increase your risk for falls.
- **Tell your healthcare provider if you have the follow health conditions.** Any of the following may increase your risk for breathing problems while you are using PCA.
  - Recent or long-term use of an opioid pain medicine, or no past use of any opioid.
  - Recent use of medicines that make you drowsy, such as antihistamines, anxiety medicine, or sleep medicine.
  - Current or long-term use of alcohol or drugs such as heroin.
  - Breathing problems, such as asthma, sleep apnea, or COPD.
  - Allergies to any medicines or any reactions to pain medicines.
- **Opioids can make people feel sick, itchy or drowsy.** It is important that you tell the nurses because we can give you something to help.
- **It is important that you do not leave the ward with the pump.** You must only walk around the ward. You can mobilize but you might have to get someone to help you move the pump and the pole around.
- **Opioids from a PCA are very safe.** People often worry about having an overdose or becoming addicted, but this is very unlikely.
- **When you are moving around comfortably** and can take oral painkillers your pump will be stopped.

**For any questions or clarifications do not hesitate to ask your nurse or to call our CMC pain team.**

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## Patient Controlled Analgesia

### What you need to know