

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 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 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 doctor or nurse.

We are always here to help.



Hospitality



Healing



Stewardship



Respect



Calvary

Health Care
Tasmania

Ref: Patient-Controlled Analgesia (PCA) Acute Pain Patient Information,
Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital



Lenah Valley &
St John's Hospitals
**PATIENT-CONTROLLED
ANALGESIA (PCA)**
Breaking the Pain Barrier
Your pain relief in hospital



WE ARE HERE TO HELP

What is Patient-Controlled Analgesia?

Patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) is a method that allows you to decide when you need more pain relief and 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 a doctor and will be based on several factors, such as your age and the type of surgery you have had.

The drug is delivered immediately and works 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 or night. You may wish to press it before undertaking an activity – such as getting out of bed – to prepare in advance.

Who can push the button?

As you are the only one who can feel the pain, *you* are the only one permitted 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 medication (called “lock-out”). This ensures the medication has time to work before a further dose is given. No matter how much you push the button, no 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, don't push the button
- Nausea and vomiting
- Constipation
- Itching

- Difficulty passing urine

Please let your nurse know if you experience any of these. Usually, these are 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 permitted. It is important that you have good pain relief.

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

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

You may be given oxygen-enriched air through a mask or nasal prongs.

This is for your safety.