

Acute Pain Service

Information on Patient Controlled Analgesia

Pain is a personal matter. The amount and type of pain relief required varies between people, even for the same type of injury or surgery.

What is PCA?

Patient controlled analgesia, or PCA, is a method of pain control that allows you to give yourself some pain relief as and when you need it.



How does a PCA work?

The PCA system is attached to you through an infusion into a vein in your arm. You control the system with a hand held button (other ways of activating the system are available if you do not have full use of your hands). When you feel pain, you should push the button on your PCA handset and a small amount of pain killer will be delivered directly into your bloodstream. Pain relief should be felt within a few minutes; if not you can press the button again.

Who controls the PCA?

You are the only person who knows when you are in pain so you are the only person who should press the PCA button.

Is PCA safe?

The PCA has alarms set to alert your nurse of any problems. It is carefully programmed to deliver only a specific amount of painkiller so you cannot overdose. The nurses and doctors will follow your progress carefully. There will be frequent checks on your blood pressure, pulse, breathing and level of sedation.

Is the PCA painkiller addictive?

Not when used to relieve pain. Pain relief is needed after injury or surgery to ensure a quick recovery and avoid other health problems such as chest infection or deep vein thrombosis.

Your part in controlling pain

You will be asked to rate your pain when you move. Use the pain assessment chart (by your bed) with faces, numbers, words or colours to indicate the amount of pain you have. Using numbers, pain would be scored as follows.

- 0=no pain
- 10 worse pain imaginable

Your reports will help the nurses and doctors to make necessary adjustments to your care.

It is realistic to expect some pain when coughing or moving about in bed but it should never be more than mild (bearable). Pressing the PCA button before mobilising, deep breathing or coughing will help to prevent your pain level from rising. Use your PCA to keep your pain level in the mild and bearable range (score 0 – 4) just before and during movement.

Are there any side effects?

All drugs have some side effects. The most common side effects with a PCA are:

- nausea
- vomiting
- itching
- drowsiness

These side effects do not occur in everybody. If they occur, report them to the nurse looking after you. Medications can be given to counteract the side effects.



Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. You cannot smoke on site. For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free, 0800 169 0 169

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Informacje te można otrzymać w innych językach, w wersji dużym drukiem lub audio. Zamówienia prosimy składać pod numerem: 01223 216032 lub wysyłając e-mail: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Polish

Se precisar desta informação num outro idioma, em impressão de letras grandes ou formato áudio por favor telefone para o 01223 216032 ou envie uma mensagem para: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Portuguese

Если вам требуется эта информация на другом языке, крупным шрифтом или в аудиоформате, пожалуйста, обращайтесь по телефону 01223 216032 или на вебсайт patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Russian

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Cantonese

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Turkish

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Bengali

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