

Deaconess

Patient Controlled Analgesia

Your physician may prescribe patient controlled analgesia (PCA) as a method of pain control after your surgical procedure. The staff at The Women's Hospital wants to provide you with pain relief measures to help you be as comfortable as possible. Controlling pain is very important in the recovery process, as it helps you to relax and move easier.

WHAT IS PCA?

PCA gives patients control over their pain by allowing them to push a button when they need a dose of pain medication, instead of calling for the nurse and receiving a painful injection. With PCA, you are managing your pain because you are the only one who knows how you feel.

WHAT IS A PCA PUMP?

Your nurse will assist you with your PCA pump. Your infusion machine hangs on your IV pole and safely delivers pain medication in your IV. This locked machine contains the pain medication prescribed by your physician and is programmed with the proper dosage.

To activate the PCA pump, you will press and release the control button. The pump will “chirp” to indicate that you have received a dose of medication.

CAN I GET TOO MUCH MEDICATION?

No. Your nurse will program the PCA pump based upon the dosage ordered by the surgeon or anesthesiologist. There is a delay period between each dose that the pump will deliver (usually around 10 minutes). Also, there is a maximum dosage programmed into the machine. It is very important that only you push the button to receive medication, rather than another person doing it for you. Family and friends may feel that they are helping by pushing the button, but they should never do this, as you may receive more medication than you need causing complications.

DOES IT WORK?

Yes, it works! PCA may not make you completely pain free, but patients report better pain control with this method. Likewise, you may require less pain medicine by using more frequent low doses through a PCA pump. Your nurse will ask you to rate your pain based on a scale ranging from no pain to the worst pain you can imagine. Your responses will guide the nurses and doctors in setting the dosages of pain medicine to meet your needs.

Patients often use a PCA pump for approximately 24 hours after surgery, and then begin taking oral medications when they are able to eat and drink. Pain medication may cause side effects such as nausea, itching or excessive drowsiness. Please notify your nurse if you experience these symptoms.

