

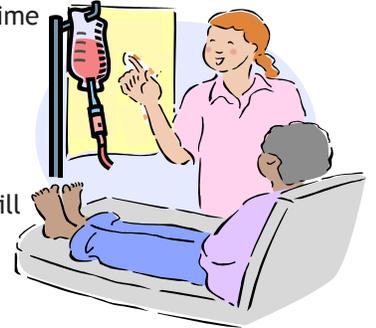


# Patient controlled analgesia (PCA)

## What is Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)?

PCA is a way to give pain medication (like Morphine<sup>®</sup>, Dilaudid<sup>®</sup> or Fentanyl<sup>®</sup>) that allows children and youth to:

- Self-treat their pain.
- Decide when they need pain medication.
- Push a button attached to a locked IV (intravenous) pump, which gives a pre-set amount of pain medication. Your child or teen won't be able to get any more pain medication until a set amount of time has passed (for example, just 1 dose every 6 minutes).



## Is my child old enough for PCA?

Children must be able to understand how PCA works. Our staff will decide if PCA is the best choice for your child. We will teach your child or teen how to use PCA, and the pain team will check to make sure that it is working well.

## Can parents push the button for pain medication?

No. Children and teens are the ones feeling the pain, and can best feel how the medication is working.



Your child won't push the button if she is sleeping or drowsy. But a parent who pushes the button for a sleeping or drowsy child could cause breathing problems for the child.



## Can patients give themselves too much?

Rarely. Your child's anesthesiologist (pain doctor) will prescribe the amount of pain medication your child should get, based on:

- Your child or teen's weight;
- The kind of surgery your child had;
- How much pain your child or teen has (at rest, and with movement).

### The PCA pump is:

- **Set** to give a certain dose of medication with each push of the button, with a limit on how much your child can get in an hour. The pump is also set so there is a delay between each dose (6 minutes, for example).
- **Locked**, so the settings can only be changed by doctors or nurses.
- **Checked** by the pain team to see how often your child is pushing the button. This helps the team decide if the PCA is working to control your child's pain. If needed, we can adjust the dose or timing of medication.

## How long will my child or teen have PCA?

Patients using PCA:

- Usually have PCA for 2-4 days, or until they can take medications by mouth;
- May need to press the button less often, as they get better;
- Will gradually need less pain medication over time, until the PCA is not needed.



## How will PCA help my child or teen?

- **No waiting.** Children or teens can ‘self-medicate’ as soon as the pain bothers them. Or they can give themselves a dose just before trying things that might make the pain worse (like coughing, turning, getting out of bed).
- **Pain can be better controlled.** We can adjust the PCA pump so your child gets just the right amount of pain medication. PCA works even better when we give other medications like Tylenol<sup>®</sup>, Advil<sup>®</sup> or Celebrex<sup>®</sup> along with it.  
Some children may need a steady infusion of pain medication for the first 24 hours.
- **Less medication used.** Patients using PCA often use less pain medication overall.
- **Patients can be up and around sooner.** Good pain control allows children and teens to move around sooner, and may mean they can leave hospital earlier.



## Does PCA have any side effects?

PCA may cause:

- Drowsiness;
- Nausea;
- Vomiting;
- Mild itching;
- Constipation (hard stool or poop that is difficult to pass);
- Trouble passing urine (going pee);
- Slow breathing (nurses will check your child often).

These side effects will pass and can be treated by adjusting the PCA dose or by using other medications.

## Questions?

The Pain Team (Acute Pain Service) will check your child or teen daily during rounds. We’ll be happy to discuss the treatment plan at anytime.

Ask your nurse to page the Pain Team (Acute Pain Service) if you:

- Have questions about PCA;
- Have questions about your child’s pain;
- Need to speak with someone between rounds.

