

Patient controlled analgesia (PCA)

This leaflet has been written for you by staff in the Pain Management Service. If you have any questions after reading it, please speak to your clinician.

Contact information

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Speak to your clinician

Patient controlled analgesia (PCA)

Information for patients

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Introduction

Your pain relief system is called Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA). The syringe is filled with an opioid (morphine, fentanyl or oxycodone), a painkiller which is very effective in relieving pain after an operation.



Good pain control helps your recovery

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.

If you are comfortable, you will find moving around and mobilising much easier.

During your recovery, you may be seen by the physiotherapists. They will encourage you to use your morphine pump before and during the exercises.

These activities will help you recover from your operation as quickly as possible.

What you should do

When the green light glows on the handset, you can give yourself some painkiller.

Press the button often enough that you can comfortably move around in bed and take deep breaths.

You should use it 2–3 times before you do something active like getting out of bed or having physiotherapy.

When you press the button you only get a very small dose of opioid so you may need to press it several times to get comfortable.

You must be the only person that presses the button.

The pump has a built-in clock. After you press the button it will lock out for 5 minutes.

After 5 minutes the green light will come back on again and then you can give yourself another dose.

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.

You will often be given other painkillers like paracetamol as well as the PCA, as they work better together.

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.

Questions you may have

How will opioids make me feel?

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.

Can I walk around with the pump?

It is important that you do not leave the ward with the pump. You must only walk around the ward. You can mobilise but you might have to get someone to help you move the pump and the pole around.

Can I overdose on the opioid?

Opioids from a PCA are very safe. People often worry about having an overdose or becoming addicted, but this is very unlikely.

How long can I keep the pump?

When you are moving around comfortably and can take oral painkillers your pump will be stopped.

What happens when the pump is stopped?

You will be changed over to oral painkillers—this may include oral opioids. Other painkillers such as paracetamol will also be given.

Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have concerns or wish to give feedback about services, your care or treatment, you can contact the PALS office on the Ground Floor of the hospital just behind the main reception.

Alternatively, you can send us your comments or suggestions on one of our comment cards, available at the PALS office, or on a feedback form on our website www.chelwest.nhs.uk/pals.

We value your opinion and invite you to provide us with feedback.

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