's Guide to Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)

What I need to know about PCA

What is PCA?

- PCA uses a pump to give me pain medication through a small tube inserted into a vein in my arm (IV).
- PCA will help me manage my own pain.
- When my pain is under control, I can move around easier. This will lower my risk of problems after surgery.

How does PCA work?

- When I have pain, I can press the button on the hand-held device to get a dose of pain medication.
- My pump will not let me give myself too much medication.
- I should call the nurse if the alarm on my pump goes off. This may mean the bag is empty.

Important:

• The nurse will check on me every 2 hours for the first 12-18 hours that I have PCA.

When should I press the button?

- I should press the button when I start to feel pain.
- I should press the button before my pain gets really bad.
- I should press the button before I do any physical activity. Examples are before moving or turning, before doing my breathing and coughing exercises, and before my physiotherapy.
- I can press the button any time I need to control my pain.

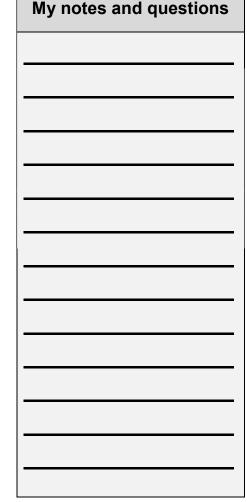
Important:

- Only I can push the button. **I shouldn't** let others, such as visitors, push the button for me. I should let my nurse know if I can't press the button by myself.
- I shouldn't press the button if I'm drowsy or if I don't have pain. I shouldn't use PCA to relax, calm myself down, or go to sleep.
- I shouldn't use my own pain medication or sleeping pills from home when using PCA.



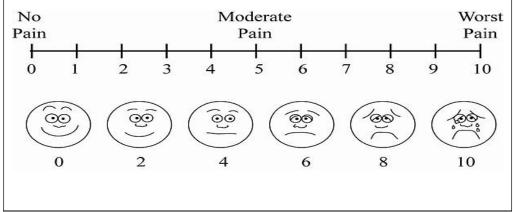






What if I still have pain?

- I should tell my nurse or doctor if I still have pain.
- The nurse will ask me to rate my pain:
 - 0 is no pain
 - 5 is moderate pain
 - 10 is the worst pain I have ever felt
- My healthcare team will work with me to keep my pain at 4 or less.



What are the side effects of PCA?

- The most common side effects are:
 - Sleepiness/drowsiness
 - Nausea and vomiting
 - Itchiness
 - Trouble having a bowel movement
 - Trouble emptying my bladder
- My nurse will help manage any side effects I may have.

Do I have to stay in bed?

- No, I am able to get up out of bed. The PCA pump is on wheels.
- I should ask my nurse for help when I want to get up.

