Implantable Pain Pump, Home Care

An implanted pain pump is a small device, about the size of a hockey puck. It is put under your skin (*implanted*) during surgery. Attached to it is a catheter (small plastic tube). The tube goes into either a vein or into the space around your spinal cord. The pump has a space (*reservoir*) where the pain medication is stored. The device pumps it from the reservoir into your body at a regular pre-set rate. Sometimes your healthcare provider will set the pump to give you pain medicine when you need it. This might be in a steady flow. Or, it might be different amounts at different times. The reservoir can be easily refilled when it runs low.

An implanted pump puts the medication right where it needs to go to relieve your pain. This often means less medication will be needed. That should result in fewer side effects.

HOME CARE

An implanted pump can stay in place for a long time. But do not worry: It can be removed at any time. For example, if your condition changes or if the pump no longer helps, it can be taken out. While you have an implanted pump:

- You will need to make regular visits to your healthcare provider. During these visits:
  - The pump will be refilled with pain medicine. Your healthcare provider will insert a needle through your skin into the pump. Medicine will flow through the needle into the reservoir. Refills are usually needed every 4 to 8 weeks. Refill time varies from person to person. Be sure to ask how often your pump will need a refill.
  - Your medication can be adjusted. The amount you get can be changed. Or, how often the medicine is pumped into your body can be changed. These changes will depend on how well the device is reducing your pain. Be honest when describing your pain to your healthcare providers. They need this information to make sure you get the right amount and right type of pain medicine. It also will depend on side effects. Explain any symptoms you have, even if you do not think they have anything to do with your pain pump. Tell your caregive if you feel sick to your stomach, are overly sleepy, or your skin itches. Your healthcare provider will know whether the medicine might be causing these or other side effects. The goal is to give you enough medicine to ease your pain but not so much that you have side effects.
  - The pump will be checked to make sure it is still working properly. The battery in the pump often lasts up to ten years. The pump will beep if a new battery is needed. It also will beep if it needs a refill or if there is some other problem.

Ask your healthcare provider whether you can take over-the-counter medicines for aches or fever. What other medicines you can take could depend on the type of pain medicine in your pump.

At first, you will need to restrict your movement and activities.

- For 6 to 8 weeks:
  - Do not sleep on your stomach.
  - Avoid excessive bending and stretching.
  - Do not raise your arms over your head.
  - Do not lift anything that weighs more than 5 pounds.
- Do not drive for at least two weeks (or until your healthcare provider says it is OK).
- Do not take a tub bath for about a month. Shower only.
- Do not do work around the house (inside or outside) until your healthcare provider gives you the go-ahead. For example, do not load the dishwasher. Do not vacuum. Do not mow the yard.

Over the long term, you may not have many restrictions. Just remember to return to your regular activities

gradually. Ask your healthcare provider whether physical therapy would help. You still need to be careful in some situations:

- Ask your healthcare provider when it is OK to resume sexual activity.
- Avoid roughhousing, fighting (even playful) or similar activity. You do not want to injure the area where the pump is implanted.
- Ask your healthcare provider if there is anything you should not do. Every person's situation is a little bit different.

- Always keep an eye on the skin that covers the pump. Call your healthcare provider if it becomes red, warm or swollen. Call if the area is painful or if the incision starts to leak blood or any liquid. These could be signs of infection.
- Get a special ID card that proves you have an implanted pump. It is called an Implanted Device Identification Card. To get this, you might need a letter or form signed by your healthcare provider. Ask your healthcare provider how to get this ID card. You will need this card when traveling. And, it is important to have in case of an emergency. Carry it with you at all times.
- You should alert airport security checkers that you have an implanted pump. The pump will set off the alarms in the security checkpoints. Show your ID card. Ask to be checked with a security wand.
- Do not worry about being around microwave ovens, cell phones or other electronic devices. They will not harm the pump.
- Make sure that family members and close friends know that you have an implanted pump. You might want to tell some co-workers, too. People need to know this in case of an emergency.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- An incision becomes red, swollen or painful.
- An incision leaks fluid or blood.
- You feel sick to your stomach, feel more sleepy than usual or have itchy skin.
- You have trouble urinating or having a bowel movement.
- You have a bad headache or back pain.
- Your pain is not being relieved by the pump.
- You develop a fever of more than 100.5°F (38.1°C).

SEEK IMMEDDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have trouble breathing or feel short of breath.
- You have a headache that lasts for more than two days.
- You hear the pump beeping.
- You have sudden symptoms (back pain, weakness in your legs).
- You lose control over urination or bowel movements.
- You develop a fever of more than 102.0°F (38.9°C).

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