PCA Pumps (Patient Controlled Analgesia)

PCA is the abbreviation for Patient Controlled Analgesia. It is a pump that allows you to give yourself pain medicine whenever you need it.

HOW IT WORKS

- When you feel pain, you press the button on the handset connected to the PCA pump.
- You will hear a beep to let you know that the pump received the signal to give you medicine. The medicine is then delivered down the tubing to the IV (intravenous connection) in your arm or through the epidural line in your back.
- You will not get a dose of medicine every time you push the button. The machine is programmed to leave a time interval between doses. This gives the medicine a few minutes to take effect. After waiting a few minutes, you can have another dose of pain medicine if you still are in pain.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USE

Use enough medicine to get comfortable without being put to sleep.

ADVANTAGES

- You do not have to wait for an available nurse to give you your pain medicine.
- You do not need another shot (*injection*) every time you are in pain.
- You can more easily adjust the pain control to yourself. Each person reacts differently to pain medicine.
- Patients with good pain control get better faster and usually leave the hospital earlier.

LENGTH OF USE

Most people progress to oral pain medicine within a couple days and use of the pump can be discontinued.

SAFETY OF USE

The pumps have been used safely for many years and have built in safety features. They should be used sensibly however. You will not overdose yourself if only used when there is pain. You do not have to worry about addiction when these are used for short term use.

RISKS

The main problem with use of the pump is drowsiness. You will be monitored to prevent you from getting too sleepy and will be monitored for adequate breathing.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The patient is the ONLY person who should press the PCA button because he/she is the only one who knows when pain medicine is needed. Family members and nurses should not press the PCA button.

Document Released: 06/23/2004 Document Re-Released: 12/06/2010
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.