

**Questions?**

Your questions are important. Talk to your nurse if you have questions or concerns about using the PCA machine.

Your Provider:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Are there any side effects?**

As with any medicine, you may feel some side effects. Some people may:

- Feel sick to their stomach
- Feel itchy
- Have trouble passing urine

If any of these symptoms occur, tell your nurse.

**Write your questions here:**

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**PCA**

*Patient-controlled analgesia –  
You are in charge*

**This handout explains how to use a PCA (patient-controlled analgesia) machine for patient-controlled pain relief. The word *analgesia* simply means “relief from pain.” The handout also answers the questions most often asked by patients who have used a PCA machine.**



Press the button when you feel pain. **Do not press the button if you do not have pain.**

### How does the PCA machine work?

The PCA machine has an IV (*intravenous*) bag of pain medicine. The IV bag is attached to tubing, which connects to your IV line.

When you feel pain or discomfort, **firmly push the button** with your thumb or finger and then **release it** to give yourself pain medicine. The machine makes a chirping noise when it delivers a dose of pain medicine.

### How often should I press the button?

Press the button when you are having pain, then wait a few minutes to see if the dose helps to relieve the pain. If you still hurt, press the PCA button again. Please know that complete relief from all pain is very difficult to achieve. Aim for an acceptable level of comfort for you.

### Is PCA safe?

PCA is very safe, as long as the patient is the only one pushing the button. Safety features in the pump mean you can receive only a small, measured amount of medicine as prescribed by your doctor each time you push the button.

Since you are the only person who knows when you are hurting and when it is necessary and safe to have a dose of pain medicine, **you are the only person who should press the PCA button.** Do not press the button if you are feeling sleepy.

### Can my friends or family help me by pushing the button while I try to get some sleep?

No, others should **not** press your PCA button. If you are sleeping, it is unlikely that you are having severe pain. If you wake and feel pain, your family, friends and hospital staff may remind you to push your PCA button if you forget – **but only YOU should push the button.**

**Remember, the patient is the ONLY person who should press the PCA button.**