

Let's Talk About...

Patient-controlled Analgesia (PCA)

Patient-controlled analgesia [an-al-JEE-zee-uh], or PCA, is a way for your child to control their own pain medicine. Analgesia means “pain relief.”

Your child may need PCA after surgery or for pain caused by illness or injury. A pain service team will decide what kind of medicine and dose your child needs. This team includes an anesthesiologist [AN-es-thee-zee-OLL-oh-jist], or doctor who provides medicine during surgery, and a nurse. They will monitor your child and adjust their medicine as needed.

How does my child receive medicine?

Your child receives pain medicine through a tiny tube into a vein called an IV, often inserted in the back of the hand. They may already have an IV from surgery.

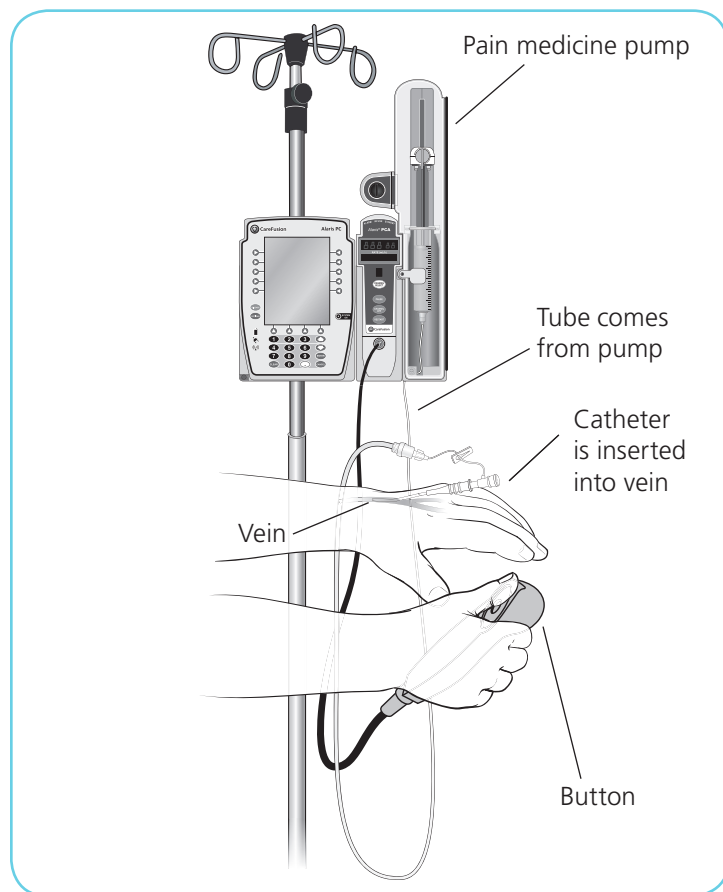
To receive medicine, your child pushes a button connected to a pump. The computer will beep and then give pain medicine through the IV.

Can my child get too much medicine?

It's unlikely your child will get too much medicine. The doctor will order the amount of pain medicine for your child, and the nurse will program the pump so your child gets the medicine correctly.

If your child pushes the button too soon after the last dose, the pump won't respond with a beep and won't give your child medicine.

No matter how often your child pushes the button, they will only get the amount of medicine ordered by their doctor. Only your child or their nurse should push the button.



What are the side effects of a PCA?

Common side effects of a PCA may include:

- Drowsiness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Itchiness

Your child's nurse will watch them closely to make sure they're not too sleepy. If your child's breathing is different or you notice other side effects, tell their nurse. Your child may take other medicine if they have serious side effects.

Will the PCA make all my child's pain go away?

No. The PCA should make your child feel more comfortable, but it will not take away all of the pain.

Tell your child's nurse or the pain service team if your child is still uncomfortable after using the pump.

When will my child stop using the PCA pump?

Your child may be able to stop using the PCA pump when they are:

- More comfortable
- Eating and drinking
- Taking pain medicine by mouth
- Not pushing the PCA button

How can I help relieve my child's pain?

Help relieve your child's pain when it's not time for medicine (or if the medicine isn't enough) by:

- Distracting them with books, music, movies, or games
- Helping them do deep breathing exercises to relax
- Turning down the lights or shutting curtains (if possible) to make the room dimmer
- Trying imagery or focusing on their senses (touching, tasting, smelling, listening, and seeing)

The pain service team and your child's nurse will help make your child as comfortable as possible. They will ask about their pain and may have them rate it on a scale with cartoon faces or numbers.

To learn more about PCA or how you can help your child, ask their doctor, nurse, or the pain service team.



Questions for my child's doctor

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