

Let's Talk About...

Patient-controlled Epidural Analgesia (PCEA)

Patient-controlled epidural analgesia [an-al-JEE-zee-uh], or PCEA, is a way to deliver pain medicine right to the nerves that send pain messages to the brain.

When your child uses PCEA, pain medicine is pumped into the space around the dura (tough membrane surrounding the spinal column nerves). The medicine seeps into the nerves between the surgery site and the brain. Because it is blocking pain at a local level, your child needs less medicine.

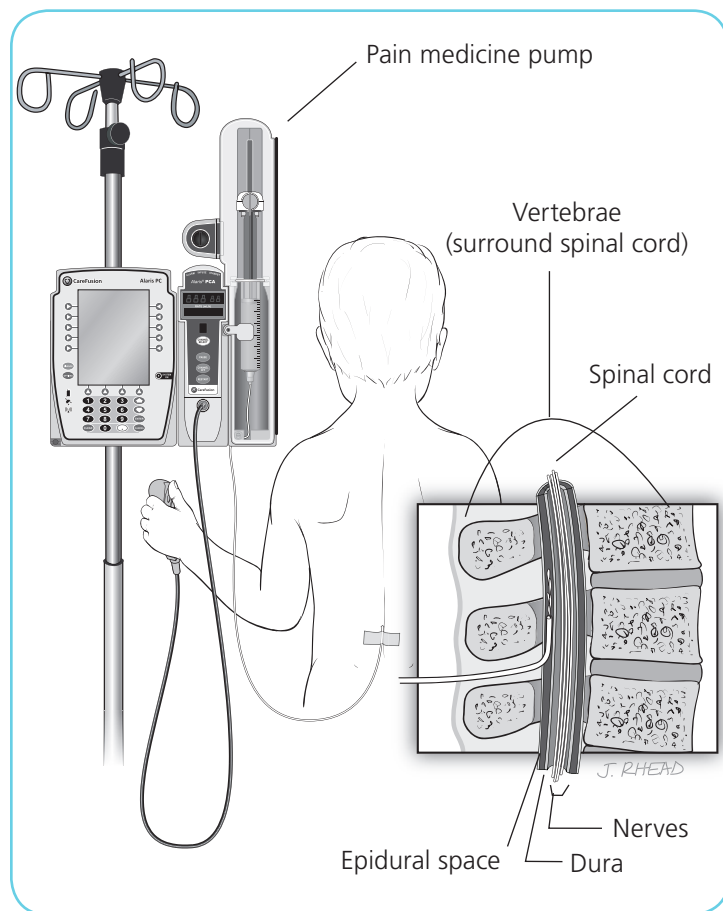
Why does my child need PCEA?

Your child may need PCEA 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 includes an anesthesiologist [AN-es-thee-zee-OLL-oh-jist], or doctor who provides medicine during surgery, and a nurse. The pain service team will monitor your child and adjust their medicine as needed.

How does PCEA work?

To give your child PCEA, a healthcare provider inserts a tiny tube (catheter) in the space next to the dura along the spine during surgery. They tape the catheter to your child's back and connect it to a pain medicine pump. The pain medicine is constantly flowing, even when your child is sleeping.

If your child needs more medicine, they may push a button attached to the pump. The computer will beep and then give the medicine through the catheter. Other medicine pumps may also be attached to the computer, but pushing the button will only control the PCEA medicine. Only your child or their nurse should push the button.



Can my child get too much medicine?

It's unlikely your child will get too much medicine; the pump releases a certain amount at a time. The doctor orders the medicine, and the nurse programs 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 give any medicine or respond with a beep. No matter how often your child pushes the button, they'll only get the amount their doctor ordered.

