

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.

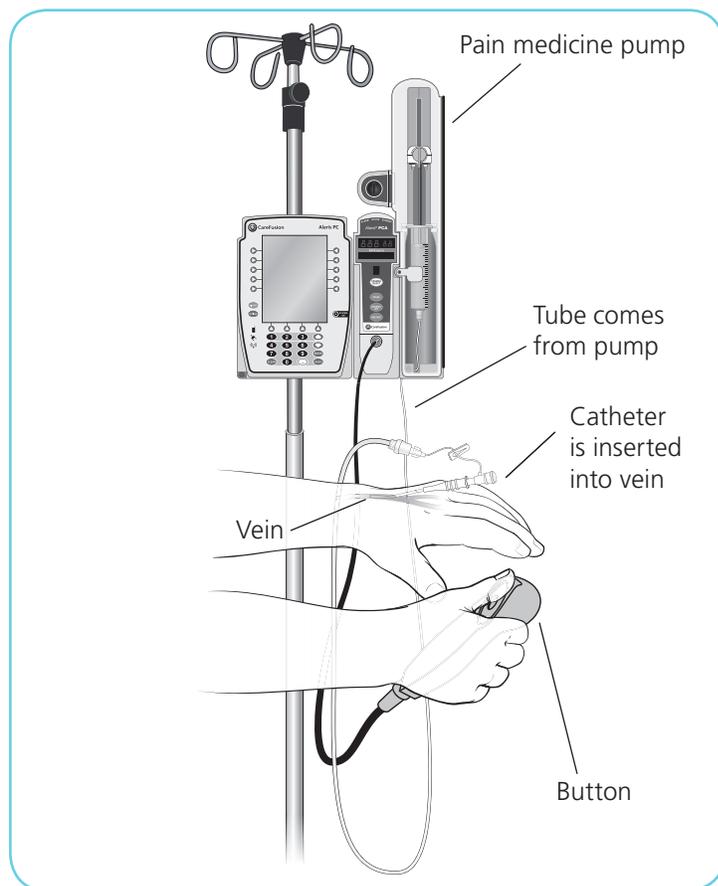
To receive medicine, your child pushes a button connected to a pump. The computer will beep and then give pain medicine through the IV.

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.

