

# Patient-controlled Analgesia (PCA)



The Anaesthesia department comprises doctors and nurses, whose primary role is to ensure a safe and pain-free journey for patients undergoing surgery. An anaesthesia specialist keeps a close watch over every patient in the Operating Theatre, offering patient care from pre to post-surgery. Our anaesthetists also support the Intensive Care Unit and Pain Service.

## Treating pain

Controlling pain after your operation is very important. Research shows that you will experience fewer problems after surgery if your pain is well-controlled. You are also likely to recover quicker and be discharged sooner.

Without pain management, you will find it difficult to get out of bed, walk, take deep breaths or cough. You may also develop chest infections, clots in your legs and bedsores. If you experience pain after surgery, please inform a nurse or doctor.

## What is patient-controlled analgesia (PCA)?

PCA is a technique which allows you to administer a small amount of painkiller (usually morphine) through a machine connected to your drip. When you press the button on the PCA machine, a small amount of painkiller will be delivered into your vein.

This gives you greater control of your pain without delay. The PCA will be set up in the recovery room after your operation. Our nurses will explain to you how to use the PCA machine optimally.

The pump on the PCA machine has settings which are programmed for the painkiller your doctor ordered. You will only receive medication when it is time to do so. Even if you press the button several times, the pump will only release medication when it is time to do so.

## How do I use a PCA?

If you are experiencing pain, press your PCA button every 5 to 10 minutes or as instructed by your nurse. Do not wait until your pain becomes unbearable to press the button. The PCA is meant to help you control your pain and not to help you sleep.

Once the PCA button has been pressed, the machine will deliver a small dose of painkiller into your vein, taking about 5 minutes to work.

The PCA machine will then lock automatically to prevent an overdose of medicine from being released. The PCA machine can record the number of times you press the button and the specific time it was pressed. This information is used by our nurses and doctors to assess your pain level. If you find it hard to use the PCA, please inform our nurse. **Only the patient is allowed to press the button on the PCA machine. It is dangerous for family members or friends to press the button for him or her.**

When there is no more painkiller in the PCA machine, an alarm will sound to alert our nurse to replace it.





## When should I use my PCA?

Use your PCA whenever you experience pain. It is useful when you are having physiotherapy sessions or when your dressings are being changed.

## How long will I have to be on the PCA?

This varies depending on the operation you had.

- Abdominal surgery: 2 to 3 days
- Orthopaedic surgery: 2 days

You will be assessed by our Pain Team before the PCA is stopped.

## **Benefits of the PCA**

- You are in better control of your pain
- You get pain-relief faster
- You need fewer painkillers
- There are fewer side effects

## **Side effects**

- Confusion/hallucinations/drowsiness
- Constipation
- Itching
- Nausea and sickness
- Slow breathing

The above side effects can be treated. It is important to inform your nurse or doctor if you experience any of these side effects.

## **What if my pain is not controlled?**

If your pain is still not controlled with the PCA, additional painkillers such as Paracetamol will be given. Alternatively, your PCA settings can be adjusted to suit your needs.

You can also seek the assistance of our Acute Pain Team or Anaesthetist if the pain persists. The PCA is meant to keep your pain level below a “4” on a scale of 0-10. Refer to the pain scale below:



## The acute pain team

The Acute Pain Team comprises of a nurse and an anaesthetist who will manage your pain while you are on the PCA. They will ensure you are comfortable after surgery. They will also help you to use the PCA appropriately.



## For more information

### Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and Jurong Community Hospital

1 Jurong East St 21, Singapore 609606

General enquiries: 6716 2000 Fax: 6716 5500

[www.juronghealth.com.sg](http://www.juronghealth.com.sg)

### Clinical and appointment line hours (closed on Sundays and public holidays)

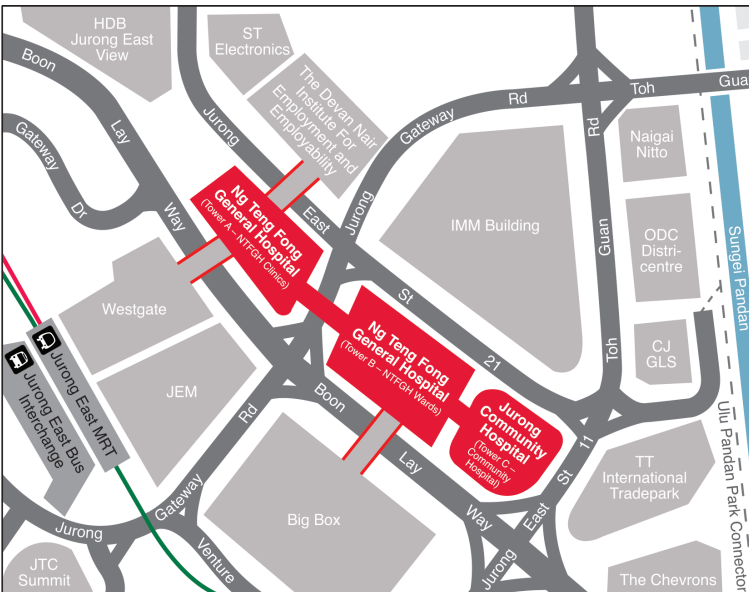
For appointments, please call 6716 2222

Monday - Friday 8.00am - 5.30pm, Saturday 8.00am - 12.30pm

For dental appointments, please call 6716 2233

Monday - Thursday 8.00am - 5.30pm, Friday 8.00am - 5.00pm

## Getting there



### By train

Jurong East MRT Station

### By bus

#### From Jurong East Bus Interchange

SBS 51, 52, 66, 78, 79, 97, 97e, 98, 98M, 105, 143, 143M,

160, 183, 197, 333, 334, 335, 506

#### Along Boon Lay Way

SBS 99, Private bus service 625

### Disclaimer:

The information in this brochure is meant for educational purposes and should not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Please seek your doctor's advice before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical condition.