



## Remifentanyl PCA

Remifentanyl is a short acting pain-relieving medicine that is given through your intravenous (IV) line. Your anesthesia doctor has recommended it to help treat your labour pain.

PCA stands for Patient-Controlled Analgesia. Analgesia is medicine for pain. Once the PCA is set up, you can treat your pain yourself by pressing the button, without having to wait or ask a nurse or doctor to give you medicine. The button is connected to a pump which gives you pain medicine through your intravenous (IV) line. You will hear a beep when you press the button and know it is working. Your anesthesia doctor will set a safe dosage for you and will stay with you until the medicine reaches its full effect. Your nurse will remain with you the entire time you are using the Remifentanyl PCA.

**You are the only person who should push the PCA button – your partner or nurse must not push the button for you**

## Why is Remifentanyl PCA best for me?

Remifentanyl PCA is usually used by patients who either cannot have an epidural or prefer not to have one. This may be because your blood does not clot well due to a medical condition or a blood thinning medicine, or if you have back problems. A Remifentanyl PCA is considered safe and provides good pain relief in these situations.

## When should I press the button?

Remifentanyl works quickly; you should press the button when you first feel a contraction starting. The medicine will help during the contraction and then wear off. **It usually takes 2-3 doses for Remifentanyl to reach full effect.** Pressing the button only when you need it lowers the chance of side effects.

## What are the possible side effects?

### Inadequate pain relief

- Remifentanyl is not expected to take away all labour pain.
- Some patients find Remifentanyl PCA does not provide enough pain relief during their contractions.
- Your anesthesia doctor may increase the dose to try and improve your pain relief and may discuss other options if you are still in pain.

- Remifentanyl PCA can be used with acetaminophen (Tylenol) and Entonox (laughing gas) to help relieve your pain.

### **Sleepiness and decreased breathing**

- Remifentanyl may make you sleepy. Your breathing may become slow and less deep, especially between contractions.
- Your nurse will attach a monitor to measure your blood oxygen levels, and monitor how sleepy you are.
- If you become too sleepy and your breathing is too slow, we may need to give a medicine to reverse the effect of the Remifentanyl.
- There is a very small risk that you may stop breathing. If this happens, you will require resuscitation. **This risk increases if others press the PCA button for you.**

### **Nausea, vomiting and itchiness**

- Nausea and vomiting are very common during labour even if you don't get pain medicines.
- Remifentanyl doesn't usually cause nausea, vomiting, or itchiness. This is because the medicine wears off quickly.
- If these side effects become a problem for you, tell your healthcare provider. There are medicines that can help.

### **What are the possible side effects for my baby?**

- Remifentanyl can enter your baby's bloodstream (through the placenta), but it wears off very quickly.
- Remifentanyl may affect your baby's heart rate.
- A pediatrician (special doctor for babies) will be present at the birth to make sure your baby is healthy.

### **For more information**

If you have questions, please ask your healthcare provider to refer you to an anesthesia doctor.