

What is Remifentanil Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)?

Remifentanil is a very short-acting pain relief drug which is used to help relieve pain during labour and birth. Its onset of pain relieving effects are very quick, and it has a very short duration of action. This medication is a safe option for women and babies, with minimal side effects.

Who can use Remifentanil?

Any woman in labour can request to use the Remifentanil PCA. Women who are allergic to other opioids (such as morphine, pethidine and fentanyl) are at an increased risk of experiencing an allergic reaction to remifentanil and should discuss this with their doctor.

Using remifentanil does not restrict your choices in other pain relief options. The 'gas' can be used alongside the remifentanil. Movement and an 'active labour' is still able to be achieved when using remifentanil.

How is it given?

A cannula will be placed into a vein in your arm. The Remifentanil will be connected to this cannula via a 'drip'. You will be given a button to hold in which you can press at the beginning of your contraction. The effect is usually felt within 20-30 seconds, and wears off within a few minutes. The PCA system will deliver a dose of remifentanil to you. The PCA system has a safety mechanism in which you can only receive a dose every 2 minutes, ensuring safe levels are achieved for you and your baby.

Are there any side effects?

Your midwife will monitor you closely whilst using the remifentanil and frequently assess your physiological observations such as respiratory rate and oxygen levels as well as your sedation score and pain score.

Some women can become sleepy; however these effects wear off very quickly once you stop using the pain relief.

Your baby's heartbeat will need to be monitored continuously throughout the use of the Remifentanil PCA, therefore you will need to be monitored with the use of a cardiotocography (CTG) machine.

When can I ask for Remifentanil?

You can ask for the Remifentanil at any time in your labour. Your midwife will organise to have the medication and PCA system set up, which may take a few minutes.



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EGHS would like to thank our consumers for reviewing this information.



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