

Which Pain Pump is Right For You?

Here are four factors to consider when selecting the right pump for you.

◆ **Reimbursement.** Check with your third-party payers to see if they'll cover the pump you're considering.

◆ **Functionality over form.** When researching the various models on the market today, you'll note that some brands are more complicated than others, with access codes to memorize or lots of different screens to toggle through. Don't get swept away by the technology of a pump. Ease of use is an important consideration, and sometimes simpler is better.

◆ **Safety.** While not all bells and whistles are needed, a pump's safety features are important extras to shop for. Having the ability to program patient-controlled bolus lockouts is key. This feature prevents excess medication from being administered in the event of a pump that jams or a patient who loses track of bolus allotments. For example, a pre-set dose of 1mg morphine with an interval of 10 minutes and a lockout of 6 mg/hour will let a patient deliver a maximal additional amount of morphine equal to 6 mg/hour above whatever basal dose is being delivered.

◆ **Capacity.** You also have to keep in mind the capacity of the pump's medication bladder. A bladder's capacity varies, and depending on the surgery, greater access to medication is easier on patients. Larger bladders means patients don't have to wait for a home healthcare nurse or a trip to the surgeon's office for additional medication or an adjustment to dose levels.

Because your patients generally don't go home with IVs or spinal/epidural catheters still in place, the typical pain pump is the one the surgeon orders and the PACU staff fits to a catheter the surgeon has installed into the site of surgery. These types of pumps generally don't have a PCA component and simply deliver a pre-set amount of local anesthetic (for example, bupivacaine, which has a duration of action of about six hours).

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