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Discharge Instructions After a Pump Refill

Intrathecal pumps deliver medication (such as narcotic pain medicine, or baclofen to manage spasticity) into the spinal fluid. The reservoir in the pump is filled with concentrated medication that is continually being administered. Over time, your pump will need to be refilled so you don't run out of medication. If your pump runs 'dry', you are likely to have withdrawal symptoms, and the pump will be damaged.

What to Expect During an Intrathecal Pump Refill

During a pump refill a needle is inserted through the skin into the pump reservoir. Any remaining old medication in the pump is withdrawn and discarded. Your pump is then refilled with new medication. The pump will be updated and programmed after your refill. During the refill procedure, an x-ray may be used to verify proper placement of the reservoir opening.

What Medications Are Used in the Pump?

Morphine for pain and baclofen for spasticity are the only two medications approved by the FDA for use in these pumps. Other medications for pain are sometimes used in pain pumps. These are known as 'off-label' uses of these medications.

What Happens After a Pump Refill?

After a brief observation period, you are free to go home. You may drive yourself after this procedure because you will not be given any anesthesia. You can resume normal activity on the day of your refill.

What Are the Risks of a Pain Pump Refill?

There is a small risk of bleeding, infection, or allergic reaction when refilling the pump. If the medication is not delivered into the reservoir, it can be delivered too quickly and cause an overdose. Symptoms of an overdose include drowsiness and difficulty breathing. 9-11 should be called immediately if you have these symptoms. If you have a pump filled with a narcotic, you should have a naloxone (Narcan) kit at home, and have friends or family members know how to use it.

Office Policy and Safety Information

It is required that all patients with an opioid (narcotic) pump have a Narcan kit at home. This is a medication that when administered in an overdose can save a life by reversing the overdose affect. If you need a kit, call the office for a prescription. Many local pharmacies in Rhode Island will provide Narcan to anyone who asks, either a patient or a friend or family member of someone at risk. Per office policy and the patient-provider agreement: You are NOT to consume any alcoholic beverage if you have a narcotic pump, or obtain narcotic medications from any other providers without permission from the office. Many sleeping pills and medicines for anxiety such as Xanax can increase your risk of an overdose. Talk to the provider prescribing these medications to see if you can safely wean off them.

Follow-Up Visit

You should have a scheduled follow-up visit with our office about two weeks before your next refill, or sooner if any changes were made to your medication dose or rate.

For questions after the procedure, please call 401-606-6360. If you feel you have an urgent problem outside of office hours, go to the Emergency Department.



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