Parenteral (Intravenous or Subcutaneous) Lidocaine for Pain

This handout is for patients receiving a lidocaine test dose, intermittent infusion or ongoing (intravenous or subcutaneous) infusion of lidocaine for pain. This will explain to you how the treatment may help. You will learn about side effects you may have. Also, it will teach you how to care for your infusion at home, if needed. If you have any questions, or do not understand, please be sure to ask your doctor or your nurse.

Why do I need this?  
Lidocaine can be very useful in easing many types of pain. Your health care provider will explain to you why this medicine is being used. This medicine does not come as a pill. It is given through an intravenous catheter in a vein or a very small needle under the skin. Lidocaine is tried when other medicines have not provided relief.

Prior to the Test Dose or Infusion  
Patients have tests to check blood and heart rhythms before the test dose or infusion. Tests can help us decide if it is safe for you to get this medicine. Test doses and infusions for adults run for 60 minutes. Test doses for a child may run 90-120 minutes. Patients are advised to have a driver after lidocaine test doses. Patients may eat and drink normally on the day of infusion. All medicines can be taken as prescribed.

During the Infusion  
Patients will be watched closely during the infusion. Patients should notify the nurse of any side effects. Many patients have some type of mild side effect.

What are the typical side effects?  
At the start of your treatment, the nurse will be checking with you often. The side effects happen more often with test doses than with repeated doses. You will need to report them if you have side effects. The dose of your medicine may need to be changed.

You Should Report:  

Mild Side Effects (at serum levels 3-8 mcg/mL)  
- Numbness and tingling in the fingers and toes  
- Numbness or tingling around your mouth  
- A metallic taste in your mouth  
- Ringing in the ears  
- Feeling lightheaded or dizzy

Moderate Side Effects (at serum levels 8-12 mcg/mL)  
- Nausea and vomiting  
- Severe dizziness  
- Decreased hearing  
- Tremors (feeling shaky)  
- Changes in blood pressure and pulse
**Severe** Side Effects (at serum levels >12 mcg/mL)
- Feeling drowsy
- Confusion
- Muscle twitching
- Seizures
- Loss of consciousness
- Serious heart problems

**Recovery**
Average recovery is 15-30 minutes. The nurse will obtain vital signs before you leave. Patients usually feel a bit drowsy and confused afterwards, therefore it is not safe to drive.

If you have any of these side effects, turn off the infusion. Be ready to have your lidocaine level drawn if needed. Mild side effects will occur first and are an early warning of lidocaine toxicity. It is very important to pay attention to the mild and moderate side effects listed.

Most of the time, the side effects will be gone within 30 minutes to an hour after stopping the infusion. You may have to wait longer for them to go away. We suggest that when you restart the lidocaine, the dose should be reduced by 20%.

**How can I help?**
- Use a pain scale to describe your pain. For example, use a scale of 0 to 10. With 0 being no pain, and 10 being the worst pain you can imagine. How much pain do you have right now?
- Talk with your doctors and nurses about any concerns or fears you may have about pain and its treatment.
- Tell us what medicines you are taking for other health problems. We need to know because mixing some drugs with pain medicines can cause problems.
- Take an active role in learning how to use this treatment at home.
- If you are getting an ongoing infusion, know what side effects might happen. Report them to your nurse and doctor. When at home, be prepared to have your lidocaine level drawn if needed.

**How long will I use this treatment?**
The test dose takes 30-60 minutes to infuse. If you are at an outpatient center, you will be discharged. You will follow up with your provider later. The provider will decide if the therapy was helpful and if future treatment will be needed.

If you are in the hospital, the team will follow up with you in the next 24 hours. The team will decide if the test dose was a success and if more therapy is needed. You and the team will decide if an ongoing infusion will be helpful or outpatient therapy with intermittent infusions. If you are getting an ongoing infusion, it can take about 2-3 days to find the right dose. The total treatment time will depend on how well it works to control your pain. Most patients will receive treatments for at least a few months.
How do I manage this treatment at home?
Before you go home, a nurse from a home infusion company will meet with you to bring equipment and medicine for you to use. The nurse will also explain how to care for the pump and needle site. They will also show you how to arrange for serum levels to be drawn when needed.

Who do I call for questions or concerns?
Home Infusion Company:
__________________________________
Other:
__________________________________
__________________________________

UWHC Nursing Policy #10.18. Continuous Subcutaneous Lidocaine Infusion.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 6/2019. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5314