

Date 30/01/2026
Your Ref
Our Ref 10989

Enquiries to Richard Mutch
Extension 35687
Direct Line 0131 465 5687
loth.freedomofinformation@nhs.scot
richard.mutch@nhs.scot

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – REMIFENTANIL PCA

I write in response to your request for information in relation to Remifentanil PCA.

Question:

1. Is Remifentanil PCA offered in all intrapartum settings in your health board, if not, which units is it offered?

Answer:

Offered at both Units

Question:

2. Is Remifentanil PCA routinely available, offered on request, or available only under specific circumstances?

Answer:

Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (RIE) - Offered on request usually for patients who are unable to have epidural pain relief. There has to be a labour ward room available to care for the patient having remifentanil PCA (rather than birth centre) so that they can safely be cared for.

St John's Hospital (SJH) - It is routinely available- most commonly by request if the patient has heard about it from their midwife but is suggested to patients if there are contraindications to an epidural

Question:

3. If possible, could you also provide any relevant clinical guidelines or criteria used to determine eligibility for remifentanil PCA in labour?

Answer:

Contraindications to regional analgesia
Insufficient analgesia with other methods

Contraindications:

Headquarters
Mainpoint
102 West Port
Edinburgh EH3 9DN

Chair Professor John Connaghan CBE
Chief Executive Professor Caroline Hiscox
Lothian NHS Board is the common name of Lothian Health Board

Contraindications to regional analgesia
Insufficient analgesia with other methods
Oral, IM or IV opioid within 4 hours (including dihydrocodeine/codeine)
Maternal refusal or inability to co-operate
Known sensitivity to remifentanyl
Impaired respiratory function
Impaired level of consciousness
Severe intrauterine growth restriction or pathological CTG
Insufficient midwifery staffing

Question:

4. When these guidelines were introduced in your health board?

Answer:

Approximately 15 years at both sites

I hope the information provided helps with your request.

If you are unhappy with our response to your request, you do have the right to request us to review it. Your request should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within 20 working days of receipt. If our decision is unchanged following a review and you remain dissatisfied with this, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner within 6 months of receipt of our review response. You can do this by using the Scottish Information Commissioner's Office online appeals service at www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal. If you remain dissatisfied with the Commissioner's response you then have the option to appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law.

If you require a review of our decision to be carried out, please write to the FOI Reviewer at the email address at the head of this letter. The review will be undertaken by a Reviewer who was not involved in the original decision-making process.

FOI responses (subject to redaction of personal information) may appear on NHS Lothian's Freedom of Information website at: <https://org.nhsllothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director, Nursing
Cc: Chief Executive