Protocol for opioid-induced respiratory depression

Give O₂, observe respiratory rate closely for 10 mins and encourage breathing

Is respiratory rate <10/min or are there periods of apnoea?

Continue observations

Give O₂, observe respiratory rate closely for 10 mins and encourage breathing

Is respiratory rate still <10/min?

No

Continue O₂

Yes

Is resp rate <8 AND sedation score >2? *

No

Observe patient closely for 30 mins

Yes

Contact anaesthetist + draw up 400mcg naloxone (Narcan) + 7ml N/Saline = 8ml total

Give 100mcg naloxone IV (2ml) - wait 2 mins

Is resp rate still <10?

No

Repeat 100mcg naloxone until 400mcg given or respiratory rate >/=10

Immediate anaesthetic review and advice

Additional Points:

- * or if resp rate <6/min
- naloxone is short-acting & respiratory depression may recur
- naloxone also reverses analgesia
- time apnoeic periods
- be aware of respiratory effort
- O₂ saturation can remain high in the presence of respiratory depression when the patient is receiving oxygen