

Patient advice sheet

Going Home with a Peripheral Intravenous (IV) Cannula

Your doctor / consultant has decided that the best way for you to receive your treatment is through a peripheral intravenous (IV) cannula.

What is a Peripheral IV cannula?

An IV cannula is a small flexible tube containing a needle that is inserted into one of the small surface veins in the back of your hand or arm for the purpose of administering fluids and / or medications, for example antibiotics.

How are cannula's put in?

An IV cannula can be put in either during your admission to hospital, at an outpatient clinic or at home by a specially trained nurse or doctor.

The cannula is inserted into the vein using a fine needle, which is then removed. You may feel some discomfort as the needle goes in, but this should stop once the cannula is in place. A dressing is then used to secure the cannula in place and a small amount of fluid is then put into the cannula to check it is correctly located.

An IV cannula will usually remain inserted for the duration of your treatment as long as there is no redness or pain around it.

Whilst in hospital or if you receive any treatment at home your nurse will assess the area around the cannula daily and may replace it earlier if they feel it is necessary.

Looking after your IV cannula

Once in place, it is important that you understand how to take care of your cannula to prevent it from coming out or becoming infected.

- **Keep the dressing clean and dry:** Try to keep the dressing from getting wet. If the dressing starts to come away from the skin, try and secure it with tape until a new dressing can be applied.
- **Protect it from knocks:** Wear jewellery and watches on the opposite hand to prevent them catching the cannula. Ensure the protective dressing stays in place.
- **Wear loose clothing:** Try to wear loose sleeves to make it easier whilst dressing / undressing, as cannulas can get caught on clothing.
- **Avoid bending** the wrist or elbow joint too much where the cannula is in place.

What to do if the cannula comes out

A clear dressing is used to secure the IV cannula in position.

However, if the dressing does become loose and the cannula comes out, please do not panic but take the following steps:

Outpatient:

You will be given an emergency kit (gauze and tape) to keep at home. Gently remove the loose dressing/ cannula and put to one side. Elevate your hand / arm and hold the gauze over the site where the cannula came out until any bleeding stops. Then put some tape on the gauze to secure it in place. Contact the department administering your treatment as soon as possible to let them know. (Please see contact numbers)

How is the IV cannula removed?

Your cannula will be removed once your treatment is complete.

Removal is a relatively painless procedure whereby the nurse will remove the protective dressing and then the plastic tubing from your hand or arm.

A small dressing will then be placed over the area where it was inserted. This should remain in place for 2 hours.

Potential risks and complications

Every procedure carries potential risks and complications. This is a very simple, safe procedure with very little risk of complications.

However, if you experience any of the following, you should let your nurse or doctor know as soon as possible:

- Continued pain where the cannula is located.
- Pain or discomfort when your medication is given through the cannula
- Burning sensation, swelling or redness around the site of the cannula
- You have a raised temperature, feel feverish or shaky.

Baths and showers

You should avoid getting the cannula wet. When taking a bath or shower wrap Clingfilm around the cannula to prevent it getting wet. Do not soak your arm underwater, and always dab the dressing dry if it becomes wet.

You should **never go swimming** with a cannula in place.

Who to contact?

If at any time you are worried about your IV cannula, please do not hesitate to contact the nurse or department where you are receiving your treatment. They will be happy to discuss your concerns and, if necessary, check your IV cannula.

SERVICE	TIMES AVAILABLE	CONTACT NUMBERS
OPAT / IV Therapy Team	8:30 – 4:30pm 7 days a week	01296 315485 07810 181584
Stoke Mandeville Hospital		
Bank Holidays (on call basis)	9:00 – 4:30pm	07810 181584
Same Day Emergency Care Unit (SDEC)	Mon – Fri 8:00 - 8:00pm	
Stoke Mandeville Hospital	Sat / Sun 8:00 – 5:00pm	01296 418175

SERVICE	TIMES AVAILABLE	CONTACT NUMBERS
Multidisciplinary Unit Day Assessment Service (MUDAS) Wycombe Hospital	Mon – Fri 09:00 – 5:00pm	01494 426073

Never attempt to put anything into your cannula unless you have been specially trained to do so by the department looking after your treatment.

How can you help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention & control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention & control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming in to and after leaving the ward. In some situations, hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser as hand sanitisers are not suitable for use when dealing with patients who have symptoms of diarrhoea.

If you need advice or further assistance, please contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS):
call 01296 316042 or email bht.pals@nhs.net

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please note that it is subject to change. Please therefore always check specific advice on any concerns you may have with your doctor.