Humber River Health

Peripheral Intravenous Therapy

Information for Patients and Families

Read this information to learn:

- What peripheral intravenous (IV) therapy is
- Why you need an IV
- How to care for the IV
- What to look out for

What is peripheral intravenous therapy?

Peripheral intravenous (IV) therapy is when you receive fluids or medicine directly into your blood through a vein.

An IV is a thin plastic tube (the catheter) that is put into a peripheral vein in your arm or hand. The other end is connected to a bag of fluid or medicine.

The bag of fluid hangs on a special IV pole. Some poles are hung from the ceiling. Other poles are on wheels so that you can move around with the IV.

Why do I need an intravenous?

Your doctor has ordered an IV so that fluids, medicine, or both can flow directly into your veins. Some medicines and fluids can only be given in this way.

Getting fluids and medicine through an IV allows you to get them into your body faster. Your doctor or nurse can control the flow of fluids and medicine using a plastic clamp on the tube.

Sometimes we attach a machine, called an **infusion pump,** to your IV to control the flow of fluids. If you need one, your nurse will set it up and explain how it works.

If you have an infusion pump:

- You may hear beeping sounds from the machine. If the machine beeps at any time, call your nurse to check it.
- The infusion pump will be plugged into the wall. You will have to unplug the infusion pump before going for a walk or to the bathroom. The infusion pump has a battery. Plug the electrical cord back in when you return to bed to recharge the pump's battery.
- Please **do not** touch the machine settings.
- Keep the pump away from water. Any amount of water on the pump may damage it.



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How should I care for my IV?

- Keep your IV site (the area where the IV was put in) dry at all times.
  - Talk with your nurse about bathing or showering with your IV. You may need to cover the IV site before you bathe or shower to keep it dry.
- Keep the arm with the IV about 1 metre (3 feet) below the IV bag. This will prevent blood from backing up into the tube.
- Use your free arm to do routine tasks and to push the IV pole.

Once the IV is in your hand or arm, you should feel no pain. You should be able to move freely.

Your nurse will check you often to see that your IV is working properly.

What should look out for?

Call your nurse if you notice:

- Pain or discomfort in your arm or hand, at or around the IV site.
- Swelling or redness at your IV site.
- Blood backing up in the tube. This may happen more often if you are receiving a medicine that may be thinning your blood.
- IV fluid dripping very fast or not at all.
- Your IV fluid bag looks almost empty.
- Your IV dressing (bandage) is loose or wet.

How long will I have my intravenous?

The length of time you have your IV will depend on how long you need the fluid and medicine.

If you need fluids or medicine for a longer time, your doctor or nurse may talk with you about other types of intravenous.

Other instructions:

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The information provided in this booklet is for educational purposes. It does not replace the advice or specific instructions from your doctor, nurse, or other healthcare provider. Do not use this information to diagnose or treat. If you have questions about your own care, please speak with your healthcare provider.

English: This information is important! If you have trouble reading this, ask someone to help you.

Italian: Queste informazoni sono importanti! Se ha difficoltà a leggere questo, chieda aiuto a qualcuno.

Spanish: ¡Esta información es importante! Si tiene dificultad en leer esto, pida que alguien le ayude.