

Intravenous Therapy



UHN

What you should know

Working together for patient care



This information is to be used for informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Please consult your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. A single copy of these materials may be reprinted for non-commercial personal use only.

© 2009 University Health Network. All rights reserved.

Author: UHN Vascular Access Committee (Reviewed by Susanne Nelson)

Created: 08/2005

Form: D-5160 (01/2009)



What is an intravenous?

An intravenous is also known as an **IV**.

An IV is a thin piece of hollow plastic inserted into a vein in your hand or arm that connects to a bag of fluid or medication by a long, flexible plastic tube. It has a plastic clamp to control the flow rate. The bag of fluid hangs on a special IV pole. Some poles are hung from the ceiling and others are on roller wheels that can be moved about.

The IV rate can also be controlled by using a special intravenous pump, which is set up and explained to you by your nurse. (See IV infusion pump information on back page).

Why do I need an intravenous?

Your doctor has ordered an IV so that fluids and/or medicine can flow directly into your veins for faster effect. Some medications and fluids can only be given in this way.

What are some things I should look out for with my intravenous?

Once the IV is inserted in your arm, there should be no pain. You should be able to move freely. Your nurse will check in on you often to see that your IV is working properly.

Call the nurse if you notice:

- Pain or discomfort in your arm or hand where the IV is.
- Swelling or redness of the IV area.
- Blood backing up in the tube. This may happen more often if you are receiving a medication that may be thinning your blood.
- IV fluid dripping very fast or not at all.
- IV fluid bag looks nearly empty.
- A loose or wet IV dressing.

Remember

- ❑ Keep your IV site **dry at all times**. Please talk with your nurse about bathing or showering with your IV. You may need to put on a protective wrap before you bathe or shower to keep the site dry.
- ❑ Keep the arm with the IV below the IV bag, about 1 metre (3 feet). Use your free arm for doing routine tasks and for pushing the IV pole.

How long will I have my intravenous?

- It will depend on how long the fluid and medications are needed for your care.
- Sometimes if you need fluids or medications for a longer time, we will talk with you about other types of intravenous. Some examples are: PICC, Midline and Port-a-Cath.

What do my family and friends need to know about my intravenous?

At times, your loved one may not be able to talk about their IV. Some things you can do to help someone you care about who has an IV include:

- Talk with the health care team about any questions you may have or discomfort you see in your loved one with the IV.
- Be reassured that with treatment and time, and the need for the IV will be discussed with your loved one or yourself.

IV Infusion Pump Information

- Sometimes a machine is used to deliver IV fluid at a certain rate. If the machine beeps at any time, call your nurse to check it.
- You will have to unplug the infusion pump before going for a walk or going to the bathroom. Although the infusion pump has a battery, remember to plug the electric cord back in when you return to bed.
- Please do not touch the machine settings.
- Be very careful to protect the pump from any wetness or water, because it damages the pump.

Other Instructions
