

Parenteral Nutrition (PN)



Information for patients and families

Read this booklet to learn:

- What parenteral nutrition is
- Why you may need it
- How you get PN
- Who to talk to if you have any questions



What happens when we eat?

When we eat food, our body gets the nutrients it needs.

Examples of nutrients are:

- proteins
- carbohydrates
- fats
- vitamins and minerals

These nutrients can help to heal your body.

Food is broken down in your stomach and then absorbed in your bowel. The blood carries the absorbed nutrients to all parts of your body.

Sometimes a person can't eat any or enough food because they are ill. Their stomach or bowel may not be working normally because of surgery. When this happens, you can get nutrients in a different way. One way is called **parenteral nutrition**.

What is parenteral nutrition?

Parenteral nutrition (PN) is a special liquid food that goes right into your blood. An intravenous (IV) catheter (a needle in your vein) delivers the food to your body. PN does not go into your stomach or bowel.

PN looks similar to a regular IV, but we use different liquid. The liquid food has all the nutrients your body needs.

Why do I need PN?

Right now, your digestive system is not working properly. If you can't eat or digest food, your health care provider may recommend PN for you.

PN will provide your body with nutrients until you are able to eat again. Anyone who can't eat or digest their food can go on PN. Your health care provider will talk to you about it and then order PN.

You can stay on PN for as long as you need it. When you can eat and digest again on your own, you will be taken off PN.

How do I get PN?

You can have PN in 1 of these 2 ways:

1. An IV catheter can be put into a small vein in your arm.
2. An IV catheter can be put into a large vein in your chest. We prefer to give you PN this way because PN can irritate a small vein.

The catheter that is usually used is called a Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC). A PICC goes into a vein in your arm and goes up into the large vein in your chest.

We must take proper care of your PICC to prevent infection and other problems. The nurses will take care of your catheter.

What else do I need to know about being on PN?

While you are on PN, you will have blood tests at least twice a week. These blood tests will help us make sure your body is getting enough of the liquid food.

Can I still do my regular activities while I'm on PN?

Yes, you can still do your regular activities. The nurses will look after the special catheter in your arm or chest to make sure it stays in place.

Who can I talk to if I have more questions?

We are the team that will take care of you while you are on PN.

PN team at Toronto General and Princess Margaret Cancer Centre:

- Dr. Johane Allard
- Ian Pang (pharmacist)
- Ann MacGillivray (dietitian)
- Celeste Arca-Juico (nurse)
- Ka-Wai Chin (nurse)

PN team at Toronto Western Hospital:

- the gastroenterologist (a doctor who specializes in stomach problems) on service
- Anna Chow (pharmacist)
- Natalie Huang (dietitian)

Please ask your nurse to contact your PN team if you or your family have any questions. We will try to answer any questions you have.



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