

Intravenous lines

Patient information

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Incorporating hospital and community health services, teaching and research



Intravenous (IV) lines

While in hospital an intravenous line maybe inserted into a small vein in the back of the hand or arm or into a bigger vein in the neck to give medicines or fluids. It is important you know what to do and not to do with the IV line.

Why do I need an IV line?

IV lines (sometimes called “drips”) are often used in hospital to give fluids or drugs quickly into the blood stream or may be needed if you are unable to eat or drink normally for example, if you are fasting for an operation.

Who puts in the IV line?

An IV line is usually inserted by a doctor or nurse who has been trained to do this. It will be placed in the back of the hand or if a bigger line is required this may be placed in your neck.

How does the IV line stay in place?

- The line will be kept in place by a sterile waterproof dressing. If this gets wet, dirty or slips off, tell the nurse caring for you.
- **Do not remove the dressing.**
- It is also important not to touch the line and try not to pull on it.
- The line will be checked each day by the nursing and/or medical staff caring for you to make sure that the line is still working properly and not causing any problems.

How long will I have the IV line in?

- This will depend on why you have the IV line in the first place. If you no longer need IV fluids or drugs, the IV line will be removed.
- If the line is a small cannula in the back of the hand it will usually be changed every three days and a new one inserted if you still need an IV line.
- If it is a bigger line in the neck (central line) this can be left in for a longer period of time while medication into the vein is required.
- Sometimes lines can get inflamed or infected and need to be removed sooner than this.

Possible risks

Signs that may mean that the line needs to be removed:

- redness, swelling, pain or hotness at the line site
 - the dressing is loose or wet
 - the line site is sore
 - the line site is sore
 - temperatures (shivery or hot or cold)
- If you notice that your IV line area is sore or red or causing you pain, please tell the nurse and/or doctor looking after you so it can be adjusted or removed if necessary

How will IV line be removed?

If the IV line needs to be removed the procedure will be explained to you as it will depend on the type of line you have. It will usually involve removing the dressing and then gently and slowly pulling the line out. Light pressure will then be applied to reduce the risk of bleeding and bruising. A light dressing will then be applied and the nurse will again advise on when this should be removed.

How can I help prevent infection in my IV line site?

- Do not touch the IV line where possible
- If you must touch any part of the line, clean your hands first.
- Remind others who touch your IV line to clean their hands first too.
- Keep clothing near the line site clean and dry.
- Do not remove the cap/cover on the end of the line. If it comes off tell the nurse looking after you immediately.
- **DO NOT** put anything such as fluids or medicines into the line as this goes straight into your blood stream and could therefore be very dangerous.

Going home

Most patients do not require the IV line once they are well enough for discharge however some may need medications for a longer period of time. If you are going home with an IV line in you will be referred to the District Nursing team who will ensure that the line is looked after properly while you are at home. They will also advise on what to do if there is anything wrong with the line.

The Infection Prevention and Control Nurses are available **Monday to Friday: 9.00am to 5.00pm.**
Telephone: 0208 510 7557

Further information available from:

- **NHS Choices:** www.nhs.uk
- **Patient UK:** www.patient.co.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can help to sort out any concerns or queries you may have about the hospital or community services. The service is available Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm. Tel: 0208 510 7315/7728

For information on the references used to produce this leaflet, please ring 0208 510 5302/5144 or email enquiries@homerton.nhs.uk

If you need help to understand this leaflet in your language, please telephone the Advocacy Service on 020 8510 7179.

Turkish

Bu broşürün Türkçe olarak size açıklanmasını istiyorsanız, lütfen 020 8510 7179 numaraya telefon edip Danışmanlık ve Çeviri Servisimizle (Advocacy Service) iletişim kurun.

Bengali

আপনার নিজের ভাষায় এই প্রচারপত্রটি বোঝার ব্যাপারে আপনার যদি সাহায্য দরকার হয়, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে অ্যাডভোকেসি সার্ভিসকে 020 8510 7179 নম্বরে টেলিফোন করুন।

-Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس ایف ایٹ کو اپنی زبان میں سمجھنے میں مدد چاہیے تو براہ کرم ایڈووکیسی سروس کو 0208 510 7179 پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔

Spanish

Si necesita ayuda en su idioma para poder entender este folleto, le rogamos llame al teléfono del Servicio de Arbitraje (Advocacy Service) al 020 85107179

Gujarati

જો તમને આ પત્રિકા તમારી ભાષામાં સમજવા માટેની મદદ જોઈતી હોય તો, મહેરબાની કરીને એડવોકેસી સર્વિસને 020 8510 7179 પર ફોન કરશો

Vietnamese

Nếu quý vị cần giúp đỡ để hiểu tờ thông tin này bằng ngôn ngữ của quý vị, xin điện thoại Dịch vụ Biện hộ, số 020 8510 7179.

Chinese

如果你需要別人以中文解釋這份小冊子的內容，請致電代客諮詢服務，電話 020 8510 7179。

Hebrew

ניתן להתקשר לשירות התמיכה בטלפון 020 8510 7179, אם יש להבנת עלון זה בשפתך. צורך בסיוע

Polish

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu niniejszej ulotki oraz jej przekładzie na swój język ojczysty, prosimy zadzwoń do Advocacy Service pod numer 020 8510 7179.

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