

Patient information

Caring for Your Cannula

Infection Prevention and Control Team



What is a peripheral intravenous cannula?

A peripheral intravenous (IV) cannula is a small, flexible plastic tube that is inserted into a vein preferably in the forearm or hand.

Why do I need it?

It is inserted to deliver medication, fluids and blood products that need to be given into the bloodstream. They are also inserted to provide IV access for a procedure.

How will my cannula be put in?

The cannula will be inserted by specially trained healthcare staff that will;

Explain the procedure, why it is needed and any alternatives. You can ask any questions you have regarding the procedure. If you decide not to have a cannula inserted, your treatment may be delayed, or you may not receive optimum treatment.

Your skin will be cleaned with antiseptic. Once dry, the cannula will be inserted using a needle, which is removed when the cannula is in place. It is secured with an adhesive dressing and a plastic tube is attached to flush it, ensuring correct placement.

Is a cannula insertion painful?

You may feel a small amount of pain from the needle during insertion, but it should not be painful once placed or during use. Difficult or unsuccessful insertions can cause bruising, pain and result in repeated attempts.

Are there any risks or complications?

Cannulation is a safe effective procedure with a small risk of complications including;

- Infection
- Irritation of the vein by the cannula or medication being delivered
- The cannula moving out of the vein, this can potentially cause leakage of the medication into the tissue.

Notify your nurse or doctor immediately if you develop any;

- Pain, redness, swelling at the cannula site.
- Pain, burning or stinging when cannula is used.
- Leakage or discharge at the site.

How will staff care for my cannula?

Care of your cannula is important in preventing complications. Staff will regularly check the cannula, the site and dressing. If problems occur, it may be removed, and further interventions may be needed.

The nurse or doctor should always clean their hands, and wear apron and gloves when accessing a cannula.

The cannula hub should always be cleaned before it is used. The cannula should be flushed before and after use.

What can I do to help?

Tell staff immediately if you have any pain, redness or swelling at the cannula site or close to it.

Keep the dressing clean, dry, and intact and avoid touching the cannula.

Tell staff if the dressing is not clean and intact or becomes wet.

Do not disconnect your infusion from your cannula, this increases the risk of infection.

It is okay to ask staff if they have cleaned their hands before accessing your cannula.

Inform staff if your cannula is not being used.

If you are being discharged from hospital inform staff for cannula removal.

When will my cannula be removed?

A cannula can remain in place for up to a week, if there is no redness, swelling or pain around it.

The staff may have a valid reason for leaving it in longer, which will be explained on request. The insertion date should be written on the dressing to identify how long it has been in place.

The cannula should be removed when no longer needed. The site will be checked after removal for any pain, swelling or discharge.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further Information

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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