

Home Care for Peripheral Intravenous Cannulae

Introduction

A course of medication has been prescribed that needs to be given through an intravenous cannula. This is called **INTRAVENOUS THERAPY**. (I.V. or “a drip” for short) Intravenous therapy is when medication is given directly into a vein via a cannula. A cannula is a tube that is inserted into a vein through which medication can be administered. A special cream or a cold spray can be used to numb the skin before the cannula is inserted. The cannula will need to remain in place for the course of the treatment.

This leaflet aims to tell you more about the intravenous cannula.

Care of the Cannula

Care of this cannula is important to prevent any problems.

To make sure the cannula remains in place, it will be secured with a clear sticky plastic dressing. A bandage will be placed over the dressing to provide further protection. Always keep the cannula well covered and protected. Make sure the bandage covers the cannula and keeps the whole area protected.

If the cannula is inserted into a vein in a part of the body which bends such as the elbow or wrist, then a splint may be used to prevent the cannula from blocking or ‘kinking’.

When bathing or washing, make sure the dressing remains clean and dry.

The cannula should not be pulled.

Please do not take the dressing off. The nurse will check the cannula site and dressing every time the medication is given.

What to do if there is a problem with the cannula

Between visits to the hospital for medication it is important for you to recognize any of the following problems.

1. If the cannula comes out, do not panic.

If this happens, the area will probably bleed slightly but this is not a major problem. Remove all the remaining dressing and cannula and cover the area with a clean cloth or kitchen towel, applying slight pressure over the site. When the bleeding has stopped apply a plaster to the area.

Contact the Children’s Assessment Unit (CAU) to let them know what has happened. Contact details can be found at the end of this leaflet.

2. If the cannula becomes disconnected, do not panic.

Again, there may be some bleeding. Wash your hands carefully and apply pressure above the cannula site and contact the CAU immediately.

If the following should happen, contact CAU immediately:

- If the skin around the cannula is: RED, HOT, SORE, PUFFY, SWOLLEN, WHITE or HARD.
- If above the cannula site there is a noticeable RED LINE, which follows the vein.
- If pain is experienced either in or around the cannula site, or in the arm or leg where the cannula is sited.
- If the cannula site has fluid or blood leaks from the cannula.
- If a rash, flushed red face or itching develops.
- If a high temperature develops.
- If any of the side effects previously mentioned in the drug information leaflet occur.

The cannula may not always need to be replaced even if there is a problem. Please discuss any concerns with the nurses or doctors.

What happens after treatment has finished?

When the prescribed course of treatment has finished, the cannula will be removed. This should not be a painful procedure.

How to contact the Children's Assessment Unit (CAU)

The Children's Assessment Unit is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, on direct dial 01603 289774

