

Intravenous therapy

What is an intravenous?

An intravenous is a thin, plastic tube called a catheter that is put into a vein to give you fluid. The catheter is attached to a solution bag hanging on a pole. This is all called an IV. The type of solution you have depends on your special needs.

The IV needs to go into a vein so the blood can carry the fluid around your body. Most often, the IV is put in your hand or forearm. An IV can be put in a foot, upper arm or inner elbow.

You may have an IV lock called a saline lock. This means that the catheter is attached to a very short tube with a cap. When it is time for fluid or medication, the cap is taken off and the catheter is attached to a longer tube and solution. This is most often done if you need an IV for medications but do not need extra fluid.



Why do I need an IV?

There are many reasons for having an IV. Here are some reasons:

- ✓ to give fluids
- ✓ to give medication
- ✓ to give blood or blood products

What is an IV pump?

Your IV may be connected to an IV pump. The nurses program the pump to deliver the right amount of medications and fluids. It will beep or alarm for different reasons.

What activities can I do with an IV?

After the IV is put in, there is no needle left in your vein. The tube is held in your vein with tape. You can move your arm and hand being careful as you move. You may do normal activities such as brush your teeth, comb your hair, eat and write. **Do not get your IV wet.**

When should I call the nurse for help?

You can call your nurse for help when:

- your arm looks swollen
- the skin around the IV looks red
- the area around the IV feels sore, burning or painful
- the drip is too fast, too slow or does not drip at all
- the IV tape or site is wet
- the tape is loose or falls off
- the IV bag is nearly empty
- the IV fluid is leaking from the system somewhere
- the infusion pump is alarming

How long will I have an IV?

Your doctor or health care provider will decide how long you need the IV. When you do not need an IV, your nurse will remove it. The IV site will be covered with a gauze pad and tape. This dressing must be left on for 24 hours to give the site time to heal.

For questions or concerns

Please feel free to talk to your nurse or a member of your IV health care team.