

What you need to know when you are on Intravenous (IV) Antibiotics

How is an IV antibiotic given?

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. A nurse or other trained person can give antibiotics through an IV.

IVs can either come as:

- **Peripheral IV:** A tube is attached to a vein in your forearm or hand. It is used for a few days only and is not ideal for long-term use.

Contact your nurse if:

- there is redness, pain or swelling around the IV site

- **Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC):** A PICC is inserted by a doctor called a radiologist or a specially trained nurse. A PICC goes into a deeper vein in your upper arm. It can be used for a longer period than an IV, usually weeks to months.

Keep your PICC line dry (so take a bath or use a waterproof barrier sleeve if showering).

Contact your nurse or doctor if:

- there is redness, pain or swelling around the IV site or in your upper arm
- the tube comes out (or part of the way out)
- the tube becomes blocked, as you may need to come to the hospital to have it flushed with a medication called cath-flo

Keep the **pocket card** the nurse gives you which gives the length of the PICC line.

Without this, the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network coordinator (formerly the CCAC care coordinator) will not take out your PICC line when needed at the end of therapy. If this happens, then you will need to see your doctor to have it removed.

Do I need to get blood work done when taking antibiotics?

You may need to have blood work taken periodically to make sure the antibiotic is safe for your liver, kidney and the blood cells in your body and that the antibiotic is at the right level in your blood.

Your doctor will let you know if you need to have blood work done and give you a requisition.

What are the possible side effects of antibiotics?

The side effects will generally depend on which antibiotic you are on. Your doctor will discuss any major possible side effects to watch out for.

Contact your doctor right away or go to the emergency department if you have:

- diarrhea that is severe (such as watery and frequent or with a fever) or does not improve with anti-diarrhea pills.

This could be an infection in the stool called C. difficile which needs different antibiotic treatment. This can even happen in 2 to 3 months off antibiotics.

- severe rash
- swelling in your mouth or face
- difficulty breathing
- noisy breathing

Tell your doctor or pharmacist about any other medications, including natural or herbal products, and even ones you buy without a prescription as they may interact with the antibiotic.