

Looking after your cannula

What you need to know

If you need to have medicines or fluids directly into your bloodstream, you may need a cannula.

A cannula is a small flexible tube that is inserted into a vein. It may also be called a peripheral intravenous catheter, IV, or drip. It is usually inserted into a vein in your arm, hand or foot and is connected to medicines and fluids when you need them.

This information lets you know what you can do to help avoid problems and to stay as comfortable as possible with your cannula.

What you can do

Tell your healthcare team about your past experiences

A member of your healthcare team will talk to you about having a cannula before it is inserted. For some people, inserting a cannula is more difficult because of their age, medical condition, vein health or the treatment being used.

It is important for you to tell your healthcare team:

- If it has taken several attempts to insert a cannula for you in the past
- Anything that has worked well before
- Your preference or any physical problems that could affect where the cannula is placed
- Any allergies you have, such as to tapes and dressings.



✓ Help to prevent complications

Problems can include pain and discomfort, leakage from the cannula onto your skin or below the skin, blockages, or germs getting into your bloodstream causing infection.

To help to look after your cannula:

- Protect it from knocks or being pulled
- Wear loose clothing over the cannula
- Do not touch, fiddle with, or move the device
- Keep the cannula and the dressing site clean and dry and try not to get it wet in the shower
- Make sure the dressing stays in place
- Keep your hands clean by washing with soap or using sanitiser.

✓ Report any problems or concerns

Your healthcare team will provide regular care to prevent complications from developing. Let them know if you have any concerns about your cannula at any time.

It is important that you tell your healthcare team if you notice:

- Redness, pain or swelling at the insertion site
- Feeling hot, cold or shivery
- Leakage from the device
- The dressing getting wet, bloodstained or loose.

If you have any of these problems in the first few days after you leave hospital, seek medical advice.

✓ Check if your cannula is still needed

Your cannula should be removed if it is no longer needed.

Speak to your healthcare team if your cannula:

- Has not been used in the last 24 hours to check if you still need it
- Has not been removed before you go home, unless you need ongoing treatment.

Questions?

If you have any questions about your cannula talk to a member of your healthcare team.

