How to Give Your Intravenous (IV) Medication

Your doctor has ordered a medication that must be given through your bloodstream, using an IV access device. With the support of your home care nursing agency and pharmacy company, you may stay at home and give your own medications. If you are not able, a friend or relative may act as caregiver to give your medicine. Under the supervision of a trained home care nurse, this is a safe and convenient way to receive your medication infusion.

Your medication is __________________. The dose is ________ milligrams (mg) in _________ ml of solution. The schedule is every _________ hours. The medication will flow or “infuse” by gravity drip or will be hooked up to a pumping device. If gravity drip, the rate is ________ drops per minute. If an infusion pump is used the rate is _________ ml per hour.

Your IV tubing may be used for up to _________ hours before it must be replaced.

PREVENTING PROBLEMS

1. Infection is the most preventable problem with IV therapy. Good hand washing is the most important step in preventing infection.
2. All items connected to your IV device must be sterile. If the package is damaged or wet, the item is contaminated (no longer sterile). Discard it.
3. Air should be flushed, or primed, out of any tubing before connecting it to your IV device.
4. If using a pump, make sure you have the manufacturer’s instructions. If the pump is electronic, make sure you have extra batteries or an alternate power source.

GUIDELINES

Use the following guidelines to decrease your risk of infection, and take your fluid medication safely.

1. Store all supplies in a clean, dry place, away from children and pets.
2. Store medications per label instructions. If refrigeration is required, place the medication in a section of your refrigerator away from food.
3. Wash hands when you begin, change, or complete an IV infusion:
   • Use antibacterial liquid soap and warm running water.
   • Scrub your hands for about 30 seconds.
   • Dry your hands with paper towels.
   • Turn the faucet off with a paper towel. Do not touch the faucet or sink with your clean hands.
4. Inspect the medication label for the correct information:
   • Your name
   • Medication name
   • Correct dose
   • Expiration date not passed
   • If anything is wrong with the label, DO NOT USE THE MEDICATION. Contact your pharmacy company.
5. Inspect the fluid and its container for the following:
   • Cloudy fluid
   • Particles floating in the fluid
How to Give Your Intravenous (IV) Medication

- Leaking or damage to the container
- If any of these problems are present, DO NOT USE THE FLUID OR CONTAINER. Contact your pharmacy company.

6. To administer the IV medication or fluid.
   a. Make sure the medication is at room temperature before administering.
   b. Remove the administration set or IV tubing from its sterile packing and close the roller clamp. Label the tubing with the date you opened the package.
   c. Pull the protective cover from the entry port of the medication bag. Do not touch the open port with your hands.
   d. Remove the cover from the tubing spike and push the spike firmly into medication port.
   e. Prime, or flush any air out of, the IV tubing. If the infusion is to be by gravity, make sure the IV pole is about 2 1/2 feet above your IV insertion site. Hang the bag on the pole, squeeze the drip chamber until it is about 1/2 full, and open the roller clamp until fluid drips out. If using a pump, prime it as described for a gravity infusion, or use the pump to prime the tubing following the manufacturer’s instructions. Loosen the end cap but do not touch the end of tubing.
   f. Program the pump as ordered or check the existing program for correct infusion rate and amount. Follow manufacturer’s instructions.
   g. When all the air is expelled from the tubing, clean your IV device by scrubbing the cap or needleless valve with an alcohol pad.
   h. Open the clamps on the IV device, flush them with saline as ordered, and connect the IV tubing.
   i. For a pump infusion, make sure all clamps are open and start the pump, after checking the program again.
   j. For a gravity infusion, open the roller clamp and adjust the drip rate. While you watch the drip chamber, count the drops that fall in 1 minute and adjust the drip to the ordered rate using the roller clamp.
   k. Inspect the length of the IV tubing. You should not be lying on the tubing. The tubing should not be kinked or twisted.
   l. Keep a record of when your medications are given.
   m. Take care while the infusion is in progress not to knock over the IV pole or pumps, as this could pull out or damage your IV access device.

7. After infusion is complete
   a. Close the clamp.
   b. Disconnect the tubing from the IV access. Make sure the cap or needleless valve remains tightly on the IV device.
   c. Flush the IV access as ordered.
   d. If removing the tubing, leave the spike in the empty bag and place a sterile cap on the end of the tubing that was attached to the IV access device. If you accidentally touch the end, discard the tubing and bag. Place the used IV tubing into a clean plastic bag or leave it hanging on the IV pole for use with the next dose of medication.
   e. If the tubing is not going to be reused, discard the bag and tubing.

8. How to change bags when fluids are given continuously.
   a. Change the fluid bag while there is still fluid surrounding the tubing spike. This keeps air out of the tubing.
   b. Inspect the new bag for leaks or cloudy fluid.
   c. For a gravity infusion, clamp the tubing or if using a pump place the pump on hold.
   d. Remove the protective cover from the entry port of the new bag.
   e. Remove the near empty bag from the IV pole.
   f. Remove the tubing spike from the old bag, and push the spike into the entry port of the new bag.
   g. Hang the new bag on the IV pole.
   h. Readjust the drip rate with the roller clamp or reset the pump so that the fluid flows at the prescribed rate.

9. Dispose of used needles/syringes into a puncture-proof container with a lid. Dispose of full receptacle according to your town’s requirements.