

Patient Information - Intravenous Cannula

What is a cannula?

A cannula is a thin plastic tube that allows medications to be injected into a vein. It is covered with a clear plastic dressing and bandage to keep it clean, dry and protected from damage. A cannula can usually be left in place for several days.

How to care for your cannula

Your cannula should be kept covered, clean and dry at all times. When washing or showering, make sure the cannula stays dry by covering your hand or forearm temporarily with a waterproof barrier such as a plastic bag or several layers of cling wrap. If using a plastic bag seal the opening by taping it all around to the skin, or use an elastic band. Make sure the cannula and bandage are completely covered and water cannot leak in. Check to make sure the tape or elastic band is not too tight.

Advice for problems

Pain or Swelling

If you experience pain or swelling around the cannula, or in the same limb, gently remove the bandage and have a look at the cannula site. Leave the clear plastic dressing in place. Contact the nurse immediately for advice. **Do not** attempt to remove the cannula yourself.

Bleeding

If the skin around the cannula begins to bleed cover it with a clean soft pad (e.g. several tissues folded, a surgical dressing or a clean handkerchief), apply gentle pressure by hand and elevate the limb for at least three minutes. Contact the HITH nurse for advice.

If the cannula falls out

If the cannula falls out, place a clean covering, such as a surgical dressing, over the spot where the cannula fell out. If there is any bleeding, apply gentle pressure to the area as described above and raise the limb. Contact the nurse as soon as possible. Dispose of the cannula by placing it in a bin. If someone other than you picks up the cannula they should not touch it with bare skin. They need to use gloves or a plastic bag to pick it up and put it in the bin.

Fever, shivering, feeling unwell

If you experience a high fever, have cold shivers and shakes, feel lightheaded or develop nausea or vomiting while you have a cannula in, contact the nurse immediately for advice. These symptoms can sometimes indicate that the cannula has become infected.

Contact us

To contact the Hospital in the Home service, please call 1300 443 989 and follow the prompts to connect to the service you need to speak to.