

Your intravenous cannula

Information for patients



WHAT IS A CANNULA?

A cannula, often called a venflon™, is a small flexible plastic tube inserted into a vein. The cannula is to give you medication or fluids that you are unable to take by mouth or that need to enter your blood stream directly. There is a small coloured cap on the outside of the cannula. It is important the cap remains closed to help prevent infection.

HOW IS THE CANNULA INSERTED?

As it breaks the body's main natural defence against infection (the skin), the cannula must be inserted in a very clean way. If not, there may be a risk of infection.

- ❖ A specially trained healthcare worker will insert your cannula
- ❖ A suitable vein will be selected (away from a joint if at all possible)
- ❖ The healthcare worker will clean their hands using soap and water or alcohol gel/hand sanitiser and wear disposable gloves and an apron
- ❖ The selected area of your skin will be cleaned using a recommended product
- ❖ A tight strap called a tourniquet will be placed around your arm to help the healthcare worker to select the best vein
- ❖ The cannula will be inserted through the skin into a vein using a needle. When it is correctly in position, the needle will be removed leaving only the cannula in the vein
- ❖ The cannula will be flushed through with sterile salty water (saline) to ensure it is working
- ❖ A dressing will be applied to hold the cannula in place. The dressing should have a clear window to allow observation. The date your cannula was inserted will be written on the dressing.

HOW LONG WILL IT BE THERE?

The cannula will be removed after your treatment ends. It may be necessary to replace your cannula if it is not working properly. It should be replaced routinely every 72 hours. In exceptional circumstances it may stay in place for longer (this would be explained to you by the person in charge of your care).

Staff must:

- ❖ Ensure you only have a cannula if **absolutely necessary**
- ❖ **Always** clean their hands before and after touching your cannula
- ❖ Ensure the coloured cap is closed
- ❖ Check the cannula site regularly and record this in your notes at least daily
- ❖ Remove the cannula at the end of your treatment, if you experience problems with it or it isn't working and after it has been in place for 72 hours
- ❖ Ensure you understand about your cannula and how you should help care for it
- ❖ Flush the cannula with saline before and after drug injections
- ❖ Ensure your cannula is **removed** before you go home

HOW CAN I HELP LOOK AFTER MY CANNULA?

- ❖ Do not touch your cannula
- ❖ **Be confident to ask any questions you may have and to challenge any healthcare worker who does not clean their hands before touching your cannula**
- ❖ Take care not to bump or pull your cannula
- ❖ Keep the dressing clean and dry
- ❖ Inform a member of staff if the dressing is wet or dirty
- ❖ Inform a member of staff if you experience any pain, heat, swelling or redness at your cannula site
- ❖ Inform a member of staff if the cap on your cannula is open

If you have any questions regarding the information in this leaflet, please ask a member of staff.

Infection Control **Contact Numbers**

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