

# Home Infusions: Infection Prevention

Not all people who need intravenous (IV) medications must be in a hospital. If your doctor believes you would do better at home, you might be able to receive IV medications there. Intravenous medications that can be given at home include antimicrobials (such as antibiotics or antivirals), chemotherapy, or pain medications, to name a few. These are called home infusions.

At-home IV treatments allow you to remain in a comfortable and familiar place. However, there is a risk of an infection occurring during your treatment. We developed this brochure to teach you about the infection risks and how to reduce them. There is also a glossary at the end of this guide to explain some highlighted terms. The accompanying Zone Sheet reviews how to monitor for infections.

*Review this brochure and the Zone Sheet with your home infusion nurse and be sure to ask questions if you have any.*

## Types of IV medications people can receive at home:

**Antimicrobials:** These include antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals, and antiparasitics.

**Anti-nausea medications:** These may be given to treat chemotherapy- or pregnancy-related nausea.

**Analgesia:** These are medications used to treat pain.

**Chemotherapy:** Certain types of drugs to treat cancer.

**Nutrition therapy:** Total parenteral nutrition (TPN) is a fluid that contains nutrients and calories calculated for each patient receiving it.

## Why am I at extra risk for infection?

The fact that you are ill or have been injured means that your body is in a weakened state. This makes it harder for your immune system to fight infections. If you have a chronic illness, this also increases your risk. For example, people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) can get respiratory infections like pneumonia more easily. Someone with diabetes may get cellulitis easily because their skin is more fragile and slower to heal.

## Why do IVs increase the risk of an infection?

People who get regular IV medications at home need a temporary IV line, a PICC line, or a central line. These are unnatural openings in your skin and they can become infected. Even if your IV infusion treatment is fighting one type of infection, it can't prevent you from getting an infection in that site with a different type of germ. This is why you must be very careful and take steps to reduce the risk of infection.

## How do I reduce the risk of getting an infection at the IV site?

You can take many steps to reduce the risk of an infection in the IV, PICC line, or central line site.

- Ask your home infusion nurse if there are any activities you should avoid doing to keep the infusion line from moving or coming out.
- Always wash your hands well with soap and water before touching the site.
- Keep the bandage over the site clean and seal it all around to protect it.
- If you have been trained, change the bandage if it becomes wet or dirty. If you have not been trained, contact your home infusion nurse as soon as possible.
- Follow your home infusion nurse's instructions about how to protect the site if you want to take a shower.
- Ask your home infusion nurse what you should do if the cap comes off your catheter. If you already know and the cap does come off, replace it and inform your nurse.
- Keep all your supplies in a clean, dry place.
- Dedicate one spot in your home for your treatment. Keep this area as clean as possible.
- Ask your home infusion nurse what you should do if your IV line comes out accidentally.
- Take and record your temperature every day, and call your nurse if it is over 100.5 degrees F.

## What can I do if I develop an infection?

We all have an essential role in slowing down the number of germs that become drug-resistant. This is what you can do to treat a site infection:

- If you don't start to feel better after a few days or if the infection seems to be getting worse, contact your doctor right away. You may need a different drug.
- Always finish your prescription, even if you feel better before the medication is finished.
- Never take someone else's antimicrobials, even if you think you have the same infection.
- Don't insist on antibiotics if you don't have a bacterial infection. For example, antibiotics do not help a cold or the flu go away.
- Make sure that your medication is in-date. If you do not finish medication before it expires (possibly due to a missed dose), contact your doctor.

**To learn more about antimicrobial resistance, visit [EndSuperbugs.org](https://www.endsuperbugs.org).**

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## Glossary:

**Antimicrobials:** Medications that stop or kill germs such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites.

**Antibiotics:** Antimicrobials that stop or fight bacteria.

**Antivirals:** Antimicrobials that stop or fight viruses.

**Cellulitis:** Infection and inflammation of the skin.

**Central line:** A special IV tube placed in a large vein to stay in place longer to give IV medications.

**Chronic illness:** A disease or condition that lasts more than a year.

**PICC line:** A special IV line inserted in a large vein, which can remain in place longer than a standard IV to give IV medications.

**Sepsis:** The body's extreme response to an infection that can cause life-threatening complications.

**Learn more at [Sepsis.org](https://www.sepsis.org).**