

Care of Your IV Site

Going home with an intravenous catheter

This handout explains self-care at home when you have an intravenous (IV) catheter.

What is an IV catheter?

IV stands for *intravenous*, which means “into a vein.” A catheter is a thin, flexible tube. An IV catheter has been inserted into your vein to help us easily give you medicines or fluids.

Because you will be returning to the hospital for treatment 2 or more days in a row, you will be going home with the catheter in place. Leaving this catheter in place means you will not need to have a new one placed for your treatment visits.

How do I care for the IV?

Keep Your IV Site Dry

- Do **not** immerse the IV site in water. This means do not take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or go swimming while you have the IV.
- If possible, do not shower while you have the IV. If you choose to shower, cover the site with the Aquaguard we gave you, or a plastic bag.



Talk with your provider if you have any questions about caring for your IV site.

When to Check the Site

Remove the bandage dressing (but **not** the adhesive dressing) and check your IV site **if** you:

- Feel tenderness, warmth, or swelling at the site
- Have a fever higher than 100°F (37.8°C)

We will want to know what the site looks like, and if you see any redness or drainage. After you check the site:

- Call 206.744.8088 weekdays from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.744.2500.

- If you are a Gamma Knife patient, call 206.744.8067 weekdays from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

If the IV Comes Out

- Apply firm pressure over the site for at least 5 minutes, or until the bleeding stops.
- Place a Band-Aid on the site after the bleeding has stopped.

If You Were Told to Flush the IV Catheter

Some catheters must be flushed every 12 hours with *sterile saline* (germ-free salt water). If you were told to flush your IV catheter, use **only** the sterile saline syringe and green Curoc caps we gave you.

To flush your catheter:

- Gather your supplies.
- Wash your hands well and dry them with a clean towel.
- Remove the green Curoc cap from the IV port. Throw the used cap into the trash.
- Let the port air dry. This should take about 30 seconds.
- Open the package that holds the saline syringe. Carefully remove the cap at the tip of the syringe. Connect it to the dry port. **Do not touch the tip of the syringe or the port connection site.**
- Take the clamp off the IV tube.
- Gently inject the contents of the syringe into the IV tube. If doing this causes pain or you meet resistance, **stop** and call one of the numbers in the Questions box on this page.
- You may have a cool feeling and an unusual taste in your mouth as the saline is injected. This is normal, but should not be painful.
- Check the tubing to be sure it is clear and does not appear pink or red. If it is dark red, call one of the numbers in the Questions box.
- Put the clamp back on the IV tubing.
- Disconnect the syringe. Throw the used syringe into the trash.
- Place a clean Curoc cap on the IV port.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns.

Ambulatory Procedure Area:
Weekdays from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., call 206.744.8088.

Gamma Knife: Weekdays
from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., call 206.744.9067.

After hours and on weekends
and holidays, call 206.744.2500.

When do I call the clinic?

Call one of the numbers in the “Questions” box on this page if you have pain, redness, swelling, or tenderness at the IV site.