

Looking After My Cannula

Information for patients and families

Key points

- Cannulas are an important part of providing the right medical care for you.
- Having a cannula put in is very common when in hospital but does come with a small risk of infection or inflammation.
- You can help look after your cannula and prevent infection and other problems by reading the information below.

What is a cannula?

A cannula is a thin tube that is put into a vein in your arm. This is done so that medications and fluids can be given to you. A cannula can also help to perform tests to help diagnose and treat health problems. The medical term for a cannula is 'peripheral intravenous cannula'.



Putting in a cannula

Your healthcare team should ask your permission to put in a cannula. They should tell you about the reasons you need one and your other options.

Important: Tell your healthcare team about any previous experiences including:

- If it's been hard for doctors or nurses to put a cannula in.
- Your preferences, including anything that has worked well before.
- Any physical problems that mean you can not have a cannula in a certain spot.
- Any allergies you have to antiseptics, tapes or dressings.

What are the risks of a cannula?

- Cannulas have a small risk of infection or inflammation.
- Sometimes the medicines we give can leak outside of the vein causing pain.
- Very rarely cannulas can cause a serious blood infection.
- Most people who have a cannula do not have any problems.

How can I help look after my cannula?

- Protect the cannula from knocks or being pulled.
- Wear loose clothing so that the cannula does not get caught.
- Keep the cannula dry while washing and showering.
- Ensure that the protective dressing stays in place.

To try to avoid infection

- Keep your hands clean by washing with soap and water or sanitiser.
- Do not touch or move the cannula.
- Your cannula should be replaced every 3 days, let staff know if yours has been in too long.
- Before you go home make sure staff take out your cannula.

What do I need to look out for?

Tell your nurses and doctors as soon as possible about:

- Redness, pain or swelling where your cannula was inserted, even after it has been removed.
- Feeling hot, cold or shivery.
- Leaking from the cannula.
- The dressing getting wet, bloodstained or loose.

Further Information:

Talk to your nurse or doctor if you have questions or concerns about your cannula.

Northern Health welcomes your questions. Ask us:

What is my main concern?

What do I need to do?

Why is it important for me to do this?

You can ask questions when:

- You see a doctor, nurse or other health care provider
- You prepare for a medical test or procedure
- You receive medication

This information is general only. Northern Health encourages you to ask questions and get specific advice from your treating team.

Northern Health



If you need an Interpreter or the support of an Aboriginal Liaison Officer, please speak to a staff member.



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