

Looking After Your Cannula

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This patient information lets you know what you can do to help avoid problems and to stay as comfortable as possible with your cannula.

What you need to know

A cannula is a soft hollow tube. Using a needle attached to the end, it will be inserted by a healthcare professional into a vein, usually in your forearm. This is called a **peripheral cannula**. The needle is removed leaving the hollow tube in the vein.

Why do I need a peripheral cannula?

A peripheral cannula can be used to deliver fluid, blood or medication that is required as part of your care and treatment.

What you can do as a partner in your care:

Tell your healthcare team about your past experiences

A member of your healthcare team will talk to you about having a cannula before it is inserted. For some people, inserting a cannula is more difficult because of their age, medical condition, vein health or the treatment being used.

It is important for you to tell your healthcare team:

- If it has taken several attempts to insert a cannula for you in the past
- Anything that has worked well before such as pointing out your preferred vein/site
- Your preference or any physical problems that could affect where the cannula is placed
- Any allergies you have, such as to tapes and dressings.

How the clinical team will help to prevent complications

Staff who are caring for you in hospital will observe your cannula for problems and remove the cannula if indicated. Problems can include pain and discomfort, leakage from the cannula onto your skin or below the skin, blockages, or germs getting into your bloodstream causing infection.

How you can help to look after your cannula:

- Protect it from knocks or being pulled
- Wear loose clothing over the cannula
- Do not touch, fiddle with, or move the device
- Keep the cannula and the dressing site clean and dry and try not to get it wet in the shower
- Make sure the dressing stays in place
- Keep your hands clean by washing with soap and water or using sanitiser.

Report any problems or concerns about your cannula at any time. It is important that you tell your healthcare team if you notice:

- Redness, pain or swelling at the insertion site
- Feeling hot, cold or shivery
- Leakage from the device
- If the dressing is getting wet, bloodstained or loose.

Your cannula should be removed by your healthcare team if it is no longer needed

Speak to your healthcare team if your cannula:

- Has not been used in the last 24 hours to check if you still need it
- Has not been removed before you go home, unless you need ongoing treatment.

If your cannula needs to remain after discharge and you have any of these problems after you leave hospital, seek medical advice from your ongoing health care team or your GP surgery.

Questions?

If you have any questions about your cannula talk to a member of your healthcare team.

Acknowledgments:

Patient information Leaflet. Looking after your cannula; Australian Commission in Safety and Quality Health Care
Patients Information Leaflet. Insertion and care of your cannula - Maidstone and Tunbridge wells

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