

Information for patients about IV (intravenous) lines

Why do I need an IV line?

IV lines (sometimes called “drips”) are often used in hospital to give fluids or drugs quickly into the blood stream or may be needed if you are unable to eat or drink normally e.g., if you are fasting for an operation.

Who puts in the IV line?

An IV line is usually inserted into your arm by a doctor but sometimes a nurse or phlebotomist (staff member who takes blood specimens from you) may insert it.

How does the IV line stay in place?

- The line will be kept in place by a sterile waterproof dressing. If this gets wet, dirty or slips off, tell the nurse caring for you.
- Do not remove the dressing.
- It is important to handle the line carefully and try not to pull on it.
- The line will be checked each day by the nursing and/or medical staff caring for you to make sure that the line is still working properly and not causing any problems.

How long will I have the IV line in?

- This will depend on why you have the IV line in the first place. If you no longer need IV fluids or drugs, the IV line will be removed.
- The line will usually be changed every 3 days and a new one inserted if you still need an IV line.
- Sometimes lines can get inflamed or infected and need to be removed sooner than this.

Signs that may mean that the line needs to be removed:

- Redness, swelling, pain or hotness at the line site.
- The dressing is loose or wet.
- The line site is sore.
- Temperatures (hot or cold; shivery)

How can I help prevent infection in my IV line site?

- Do not touch the IV line where possible
- If you must touch any part of the line, clean your hands first.
- Remind others who touch your IV line to clean their hands first too.
- Keep clothing near the line site clean and dry.
- If you notice that your IV line site is **sore or red or causing you pain, please tell the nurse and/or doctor** looking after you so it can be removed.