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Giving home intravenous (IV) medication using gravity giving sets

Patient information

This information sheet explains how to give medication using gravity giving sets (also called drips). You can also view a video about giving medication using gravity giving sets on the Trust's Home Intravenous (IV) therapy service web page. It is important to follow these instructions to make sure medication is given correctly and reduce the risk of infection.

Before you start giving the medication

- Make sure you are in a quiet room, away from anything that may distract you.
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.
- In between the different stages of preparing and giving the medication: use alcohol gel to clean your hands or wash your hands.
- Clean the surface of the table or tray you are using to prepare the medication with antibacterial surface cleaner, disinfectant wipes or warm soapy water. Allow the surface to dry.
- Use this surface to prepare the IV medication.

Giving medication using gravity giving sets

1. Unclamp the IV line.
2. Pick up the saline IV flush (syringe containing sodium chloride solution). Point the syringe upwards and push in the plunger until there is no air left in the syringe and place the lid back on.
3. Remove the lid from the vial containing the medication.
4. Tear open the pouch containing a small disposable cleaning wipe. Use the wipe to clean the top of the vial for at least 30 seconds and allow time to dry.
5. Take the saline bag out of its package by tearing the bag. Place the bag on the clean surface. The saline bag has two entry points, one of these points has a cap.
6. Tear open the pouch containing a small disposable cleaning wipe. Use the wipe to clean the entry point without the cap for at least 30 seconds and allow time to dry.
7. Open the packages containing the syringe and the needle. Put them together, without touching the tip of the syringe or the needle base. Allow air inside the syringe by pulling the plunger and remove the cap of the needle.

8. Hold the vial in one hand and the syringe with the other. Push the needle through the rubber on top of the vial. Push air into the vial and hold it upside down to allow the medication to enter the syringe. Remove the syringe.
9. Put down the vial and pick up the saline bag.
10. Insert the needle through the entry point that does not have a cap on the saline bag. Mix the content of the syringe into the saline bag by pushing the plunger until the syringe is empty.
11. Remove the syringe.
12. Take the giving set out of its package. Clamp the roller clamp by rolling it down and place it on a clean surface.
13. Pick up the saline bag and remove the cap from the outlet port (the nurse will show you the outlet port).
14. Remove the cover from the giving set spike and hold it with one hand. Use your other hand to pick up the outlet port from the saline pack and insert the spike.
15. Hang the saline bag with the giving set in place.
16. Squeeze the drip chamber until it is one-third full.
17. Unclamp the roller clamp by rolling it up. You will see a solution coming through the line. This is called priming the line. Priming removes all the air in the line. An IV line needs to be primed to prevent air from entering the bloodstream.
18. Let the fluid go all the way down to the end of the tubing and clamp the roller clamp again. Set up the flow regulator as the nurse has shown you.
19. When the medication is ready, tear open the pouch containing a small disposable cleaning wipe. Use the wipe to clean the end of the line (also known as the bung) for at least 30 seconds and allow time to dry.
20. Attach the IV flush syringe to the bung and push the plunger until you have given the amount of saline (mls) as directed by the nurse, to clean the line before you give the medication. Remove the syringe and replace the lid.
21. Remove the plastic stopper from the IV line of the gravity giving set and attach it to the bung. Unclamp the roller clamp by rolling it up.
22. You will know that the medication is being infused (going into the bloodstream) because you will see drips falling inside the drip chamber. The infusion is finished when the bag is empty. You can now undo the line.
23. Clean the IV line by flushing it again. Remove the lid from the IV flush and attach the syringe to the bung. Slowly push the plunger until you have given the amount of saline (mls) as directed by the nurse.
24. When you have finished flushing, clamp the IV line and remove the syringe.
25. Dispose of any needles, syringes, other equipment and packaging as the nurse has shown you.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about your medication, please speak to the staff caring for you or contact our medicines advisory service:

Medicines advisory service

Tel: 020 7351 8901 ext. 2222 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm)

Email: medinfo@rbht.nhs.uk

More information

See videos and more information on the Home Intravenous (IV) therapy service page on Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust's website (www.rbht.nhs.uk).

If you need help or advice about any service or department at our hospitals, and feel unable to talk to those people responsible for your care, call the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 020 7349 7715 or email pals@rbht.nhs.uk. This is a confidential service.

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