



West Hertfordshire  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Trust



A guide to...

# Cannula

## *Patient information*

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## What is a cannula?

A cannula is a plastic catheter inserted into a vein (usually in the back of your hand or arm), using a small fine needle. The needle is removed, and the plastic tube (catheter) is left inside the vein.

The cannula has one or more connectors which allows medications or fluids to be administered directly into your bloodstream.



## What care should be taken when my cannula is inserted?

The healthcare professional inserting the cannula should clean their hands and wear gloves and apron.

If you have not seen the inserter clean their hands, do not be afraid to ask if they have.

The skin around the area will be cleaned. All cannulas are used only once and come in a sterile and sealed packet. The packaging is opened just before use.

A note will be made in your medical records of the date/ time/ type of cannula.

## How will my cannula be cared for?

The two biggest risks of having a cannulas are:

1. Infection
2. Infiltration (the medication or fluids being administrated don't go into the vein, but into the surrounding tissue as well).

To reduce these risks and to hold the cannula securely in place, a sterile see-through dressing is applied over it.

Please let your nurses know if this dressing becomes loose, stained, or dirty.

Before giving any medications/ fluids through the cannula, the healthcare practitioner will clean the connector with a small wipe.

The cannula site should be checked at least twice a day for pain or redness. The nurses will do this during their daily assessments.

However, if the area around the cannula becomes **painful** before being checked, or **red or swollen**, **you must** tell one of your nurses immediately. It may need to be removed: a painful cannula is not a working cannula.

## When will the cannula be removed?

Provided it is not causing any problems, the cannula can stay in place until it is no longer needed.

One of your nurses will remove it before you are discharged from hospital.

Please make sure you do not go home with the cannula in place unless you are told you will be receiving intravenous medications at home from community services professionals.