The James
The Ohio State University
COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER

Peripheral Intravenous (IV) Therapy

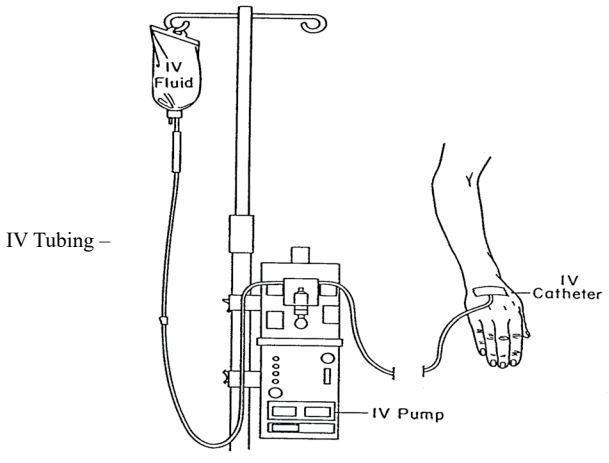
Giving fluids through a vein is called intravenous (IV) therapy. It is common to receive IV therapy in the hospital. An IV may be used for the following:

- To add fluids to the body to prevent or treat dehydration. Dehydration can happen when you are not able to eat or drink enough to meet your body's needs.
- To give medicines that cannot be given by mouth, or medicines that need to work quickly.
- To give blood or blood products.

There are different types of IVs that may be used depending on your therapy. A **peripheral IV**, often put in your hand or arm, is a common type of IV used.

IV Catheters and Pumps

- IV therapy requires a nurse or doctor to put a special tube into a vein, called an **IV catheter**. The tube is held in place by a clear dressing, so the site where it enters your skin can be seen. The site will be checked often for any signs of redness, swelling or tenderness.



This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

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- Based on your care needs, more than one type of IV catheter may be used at one time.
- The IV tubing is often put through a machine called an IV pump. The IV pump controls how fast the fluid flows into the vein. The machine has an alarm that makes a beeping sound. The alarm alerts the nurse to check the IV. An alarm may be set off for different reasons such as, the IV bag is empty or if the IV tubing is kinked.
- IV fluids may run continuously or may be given only at certain times as needed. In some cases, a small cap may be put onto the IV catheter so you will not be connected to the IV tubing or IV bag all the time.

IV Fluid

The type of IV fluid given will be based on your needs. Like any medicine, your doctor will order the type of fluid you need. You may be given different types of fluids during your treatment as your needs change. Most IV fluids come in a clear bag. Sometimes a dark colored plastic bag may cover the IV fluid to protect it from the light.

Signs of Problems

Call your nurse to check your IV site if you have any of these signs:

- Pain
- Redness
- Swelling
- Leaking fluid
- Bleeding
- Loose dressing
- Blood backing up in the IV tubing

Talk with your nurse or doctor if you have any questions about your IV therapy or other treatments.