

Taking Intravenous (IV) Antibiotics at Home

What are IV antibiotics?

Antibiotics are medicines that are used to treat infections. Intravenous [in-tra-VEEN-us] (IV) antibiotics are given by injecting the antibiotics through a small tube that goes directly into your vein.

When would I need to take IV antibiotics at home?

Sometimes as you start to heal from a serious infection, you can leave the hospital and continue your recovery at home. You will need to keep taking your IV antibiotics while at home.

What do I need at home to take IV antibiotics?

To take IV antibiotics in your home, you will need:

- **A refrigerator** to keep the antibiotics cool.
- **A clean space** to work in. It's important to keep the tubes, syringes, and your skin as clean as possible and free from germs.
- **Someone that can inject IV antibiotics every time they are needed** (some antibiotics need to be injected several times each day). This can either be you or another person. First, you or another person must be trained, then able to follow instructions and use certain supplies.
- **A phone that can record messages.** Your pharmacy will call you regularly to arrange for the delivery of your antibiotics. A home health nurse will call you weekly to arrange for a visit to draw your blood. They need to be able to leave a message and have you call back if you aren't able to answer when they call.



If I can't do IV antibiotics at home, what are some other options?

There are many reasons why IV antibiotics at home might not work for you. Talk with your doctor or case manager about other options such as:

- Finishing your IV antibiotics in a live-in facility such as a skilled nursing facility or nursing home. They have nurses that can give your IV antibiotics to you daily.
- Visiting a health clinic every day where a caregiver can inject your IV antibiotics for you.
- Possibly switching your IV antibiotic to another type of antibiotic that you can take as a pill or liquid. This will only be done if it is considered safe for you.

What happens when I take IV antibiotics at home?

Your home healthcare company will give you instructions. Generally, you can expect:

- 1 Set-up.** You will set up your first delivery of antibiotics with a pharmacy, the first nursing visit, and a follow-up appointment with your doctor while still in the hospital or on the day you are discharged.
- 2 Training.** A home health nurse will teach you or your caregiver how to inject the antibiotics. This will include how much to give and how often. They will also teach you how to use any equipment or supplies.
- 3 Daily injections.** A nurse will not come to your home to inject the IV antibiotics. **You or your caregiver will inject the antibiotics each time they are needed.** (Some antibiotics must be injected 2 or 3 times a day.)
- 4 Weekly phone calls and visits.** Two groups will contact you often when you are taking IV antibiotics at home. It is very important that you talk to each group so that you can continue to take your IV antibiotics.
 - A home health nurse will call to schedule a visit each week. They will check your tubing, change bandages, and draw a blood sample. This will be sent to the lab to make sure you are getting better.
 - A home health pharmacy will call to schedule the delivery of antibiotics. A truck will deliver the antibiotics to your home. You or your caregiver need to be home to sign for the delivery.
- 5 Stopping antibiotics.** Your doctor will decide when you can stop taking IV antibiotics. The pharmacist and home health nurse will explain what to do with the unused antibiotics and how to get any equipment returned. You may be charged for equipment that is not returned.

What if I have problems or questions when taking IV antibiotics at home?

You can call someone at any time if you have questions or problems.

Home Health Pharmacy

Pharmacy name: _____

Pharmacy phone number: _____

Home Health Nursing

Company name: _____

Phone number: _____

After-hours phone: _____

Your Doctor's Office

Doctor's name: _____

Doctor's phone number: _____

When should I call for help?

Call your nurse, pharmacist, or doctor right away if you have:

- Fever or chills
 - Rash, itching, or hives
 - Difficulty breathing with swelling in your face, hands, tongue, or throat
 - New or worsening diarrhea
 - More than 3 times per day
 - Bloody diarrhea
 - Abdominal (belly) pain or cramping
- Don't take any over-the-counter medicine for diarrhea until you talk to your doctor.**
- Problems at the site where the IV tube enters the body, such as:
 - Leaking or oozing liquid
 - Pain or swelling in the area
 - Red streaks under the skin
 - Area feeling hot

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