

Let's Talk About...

Parenteral Nutrition

If your child cannot eat by swallowing food, he can get his nourishment in other ways. **Parenteral nutrition** (PN) is one way of giving nutrients (food) to your child. When your child is given parenteral nutrition, he receives a special liquid food mixture through an **intravenous** (in-tra-VEE-nus) **catheter** (KATH-et-er), or **IV**. The tiny IV tube delivers the nutrients into a vein, which brings nourishment to his body.

PN is sometimes called **Total Parenteral Nutrition**, or **TPN**. It is also known as hyperalimentation (hy-per-AL-im-en-TAY-shun).

Why is PN needed?

All children need food to live and grow. There are many different reasons that a child cannot eat food. Sometimes a child cannot eat enough food because of an illness. The digestive system may not be working right, or a child may have had surgery to remove part of his stomach or intestines. The child must get nutrition in another way.

PN will provide the nutrients your child needs for normal growth and development. Good nutrition helps heal wounds and fight infections. Eating food is a better form of nourishment, but until your child is better, PN is a good way for him to get the nutrition he needs.

How is PN given?

PN consists of two liquids. The clear yellow, fluid contains carbohydrates, protein, vitamins, minerals, and micronutrients (MIKE-row-NEW-tree-ents). These are tiny traces of nutrients that are needed by the body.

A white fluid, called intralipid (in-tra-LIP-id), is a solution that delivers essential fatty acids. They are needed for healthy brain growth, the health of cells, and for calories.

The two liquids are given together through your child's IV. A pump is used to help the liquids flow. New bags of PN are given every day. Because the fluid goes right into the bloodstream, it must be sterile to prevent a blood infection.

Are there risks?

Complications are possible with any procedure but are not always serious. A large amount of fluid is given to your child, so he may urinate more frequently. Sometimes your child may become flushed, which is like blushing. He may feel sick to his stomach. If this happens, he can be given medicine to help.

Some complications are more serious. There is always the risk of infection, which can be treated with antibiotics. Basic body chemistry may be affected, so your doctor will check your child's blood chemistry and adjust the fluids based on the results of lab tests.

What do I need to do at home?

If your child will need PN at home, you will get training to teach you how to take care of the catheter. It is very important to keep the IV tubing sterile to prevent a blood infection.

Your doctor and nurses will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.



© 2014 Intermountain Healthcare, Primary Children's Hospital. All rights reserved. The content presented here is for your information only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, and it should not be used to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Please consult your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns. More health information is available at intermountainhealthcare.org. Pediatric Education Services 801-662-3500 LTA520407987 - 08/14 Also available in Spanish.