

# How to Care for Your Intravenous (IV) Catheter at Home



Allina Health

## Phone Numbers

Health care provider's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Health care provider's phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital: \_\_\_\_\_

Pharmacy: \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance company: \_\_\_\_\_

Home infusion company: \_\_\_\_\_

Home care nursing agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Other numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Introduction

Your health care provider has chosen a special intravenous (IV) catheter to be placed under your skin (into your vein) for medicines. The type of catheter you have will determine how long it can be left in.

The information in this booklet includes information for:

- how to flush the catheter using the SASH method and pre-filled syringes
- when to call your home care nursing agency
- possible problems (complications) and what to do if they occur
- activity information.

### Important

Your nurse will tell you which of the following you will use to administer your medicine.

- Elastomeric pump:**  
Device to give medicine at a set rate.
- Mini-bag:**  
Bag in which medicine (powder) is mixed before medicine is given.
- Infusion pump:**  
Electronic pump to give medicine.  
This is programmed by your pharmacist.
- Other**

## Flushing Your IV Catheter

You have had a \_\_\_\_\_  
IV catheter placed under your skin (into your vein).  
The IV must be flushed at certain times to prevent it  
from becoming plugged.

### Supplies you need

- Four alcohol wipes
- One or two pre-filled saline (sodium chloride) syringes.  
If you have been instructed to do a flush with heparin,  
use one or two heparin syringes. The number of syringes  
you'll need will depend on how many ends (lumens)  
your catheter has.

### What to prepare

- Gather your supplies.
- Wash your work area (tabletop) with soap and water to help prevent infection.
- Wash your hands well with soap and water for 20 seconds to help prevent infection.



**Wash your hands well with soap.**

## Flushing your IV catheter

Your health care provider may teach you a technique called the “SASH method” to flush your IV catheter.

### SASH stands for:

**S:** Saline

**A:** Administer medicine

**S:** Saline

**H:** Heparin (if ordered)

### Using the SASH method to flush your IV catheter

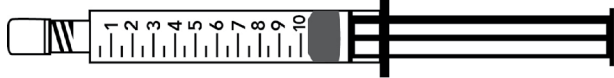
- Saline: \_\_\_ mLs every \_\_\_ hours
- Administer medicine:  
\_\_\_ mLs every \_\_\_ hours over \_\_\_ minutes
- Saline: \_\_\_ mLs every \_\_\_ hours
- Heparin: \_\_\_ mLs every \_\_\_ hours (if ordered)
  - 10 units per mL
  - 100 units per mL

**If there is more than one end of your catheter, each end must be flushed separately.**

Use the guide on the next page to help you use the SASH method.

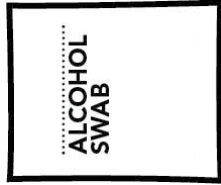
# SASH Method

Unclamp catheter if your IV line has a clamp

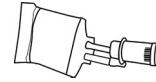


**S**

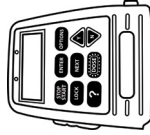
Saline \_\_\_\_\_ mLs every \_\_\_\_\_ hours



Elastomeric pump



Mini-bag

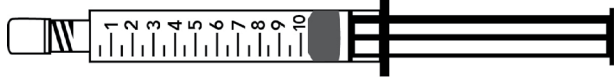
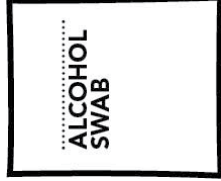


Infusion pump

Other

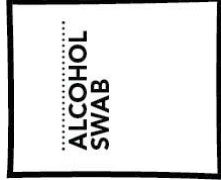
**A**

Administer Medicine every \_\_\_\_\_ hours over \_\_\_\_\_ minutes



**S**

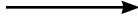
Saline \_\_\_\_\_ mLs every \_\_\_\_\_ hours



**H**

Heparin (if ordered) \_\_\_\_\_ mLs every \_\_\_\_\_ hours  
 10 units per mL  
 100 units per mL

Clamp catheter if your IV line has a clamp

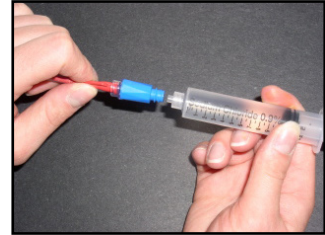


## How to flush the catheter with a pre-filled syringe

- Clean your work area, gather your supplies and wash your hands before starting.
- Remove the pre-filled saline syringe from the package.
- Remove the cap or plastic cover from the tip of the syringe.
- Hold the syringe so the tip points upward.
- Slowly push up on the barrel or plunger of the syringe to remove air bubbles from the syringe.
- Hold the syringe between your middle finger and pointer finger (index finger) to keep the tip of the syringe from touching anything.
- Pick up an alcohol wipe. Open the alcohol wipe and scrub the end of the cap or the valve on the tip of the catheter for 15 seconds. Allow to dry for 15 seconds.
- Screw the syringe firmly into the end cap or valve of the catheter.
- If your catheter has a clamp on it, open the clamp.
- Push on the plunger or barrel of the syringe in a push-pause motion. Push (or flush) the saline solution into the catheter. The push-pause motion creates motion (turbulence) in the catheter to clean it better.

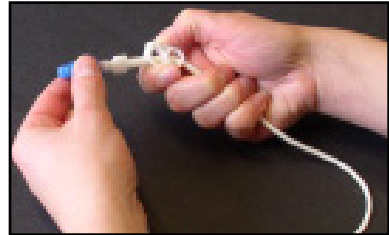


**Clean the catheter while holding the syringe in one hand. Be sure the syringe tip does not touch anything.**



**Screw the syringe into the end of the cap.**

- **If you feel resistance while flushing, stop.** Do not force it. Resistance could mean the catheter is plugged. Forcing the syringe flush may damage the catheter or break off an internal blood clot in your bloodstream, which could be very dangerous. Make sure if you have a clamp, it is open. If you cannot flush the catheter, call your home care nursing agency or home infusion pharmacy.
- If your catheter has a clamp on it, clamp the catheter when you are done with the flush.
- After flushing the catheter, unscrew the syringe from the end of the catheter and throw the syringe away.
- Repeat the steps to flush the second end if the catheter has two ends.



**If your catheter has a clamp, be sure to open and close it as you were taught.**

Straining or heavy lifting may make blood back up into the catheter. If you see blood in the catheter, flush right away using the above steps. Flush again at the routine time.

Notes or questions for your home care nursing agency:

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## When to Call Your Home Care Nursing Agency

Call your home care nursing agency if:

- the catheter breaks or comes out
- you have shortness of breath or feeling of discomfort in your chest
- you have swelling of your hand, arm, chest, shoulder or neck on the side where the catheter is
- you are unable to flush the catheter with normal pressure
- the dressing gets wet or becomes loose
- you have a burning sensation when flushing the catheter
- bleeding at the catheter site after the first couple of days
- you have signs of infection, which may include:
  - a temperature of 100.4 F or higher
  - chills, shaking, body aches or sweating, especially when flushing the IV catheter
  - pain at the catheter or along the catheter where it lies under the skin
  - increased redness, swelling, drainage or pain where the catheter comes out of the skin.

## **Problems (Complications)**

### **If the catheter breaks**

- If there is a clamp, clamp the catheter right away.
- If there is not a clamp, bend and pinch the catheter so it is folded.
- Keep the fold in place with a rubber band or tape.
- Go to your nearest hospital Emergency Department to have the catheter repaired or removed.

### **If the catheter is accidentally pulled out**

- If the catheter pulls out only a little, call your home care nursing agency.
- If the catheter pulls out all the way, apply pressure over the skin area where the catheter was located.
- Go to your nearest hospital Emergency Department. (Bring the catheter.)
- Call 911 if you have shortness of breath or chest pain.

### **If the cap at the end of the catheter comes off and blood comes out**

- If there is a clamp, clamp the catheter.
- If there is no clamp, pinch the catheter or fold it to stop the blood flow.
- Clean the end of the catheter with an alcohol wipe.
- Screw a new cap onto the end of the catheter.
- Unfold the catheter.
- Flush the catheter in the usual manner.
- Call your home care nursing agency.

## Other Information

### Activity

- Work, exercise and sexual activity can be done if allowed by your medical condition or as instructed by your home care nursing agency. Tape the catheter in place and make sure it is not pulled during activity.
- Ask your home care nursing agency if you can swim or go in hot tubs. You may not be able to do either if you are at risk for infection. Remember, the dressing and catheter cannot get wet.

### Catheter site

- Call your home care nursing agency right away if the dressing gets wet or becomes loose, or if you have skin irritation.
- Look at the skin where the catheter comes out every day. Call your home care nursing agency if there is any new redness, swelling, drainage or pain.
- Avoid wearing clothing or fabric that may rub or catch on the catheter.
- Tape the catheter to your skin to prevent it from being pulled.

### Stitches

- In some cases, the stitches (or sutures) are removed 2 to 4 weeks after the IV catheter is inserted. Ask your home care nursing agency if the stitches should be removed.

### Identification card

- Always carry your card that identifies the type of catheter you have.

Call your home care nursing agency if you have any questions or concerns.



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