

Introduction to **OPAT** (**O**utpatient **P**arenteral **A**ntibiotic **T**herapy) for Patients and Families

Overview:

- Intravenous (IV) antibiotic treatment can be given in the hospital, home or at a skilled nursing facility.
- When IV antibiotics are given outside the hospital, it is called **Outpatient Parenteral (intravenous) Antibiotic Therapy,** or **OPAT.**
- IV antibiotics are used for serious infections that cannot be cured with pills (antibiotics you take by mouth).
- To give OPAT, you will need to have an IV line placed in your arm or chest. IV antibiotics are given through this IV line.
- The Infectious Disease (ID) team will develop a plan for your care. If you receive IV nursing at home, your nurse will teach you how to use the antibiotics and keep your catheter clean. Please follow your nurse's instructions exactly!

Intravenous (IV) Antibiotics:

- The antibiotics used for OPAT are chosen for safety, effectiveness, and ease of use. If you go home, a home-care IV nurse will do a start-of-care visit, followed by weekly teaching, IV line care, lab draws and support. If you go to a skilled nursing facility, the nurses there will care for your IV line and give you your antibiotics.
- At home you will have additional nursing visits for ongoing teaching, IV line care, lab draws and other support.
- Deliveries will be made so that you get the medication and supplies by the time you need them, every time.
- The IV site needs to be checked and have a new dressing applied **at least** once a week. In addition, blood tests need to be done **at least weekly**, so we can see how well the antibiotics are treating your infection.
- Antibiotics need to be given at the same time each day. You can pick a time that fits with your schedule. The number of daily doses you get will depend upon the type of antibiotic you are being given.
- Clean your hands with soap and water, or an alcohol-based solution (such as Purell), before you touch your IV line.
- Please make sure you go to all ID clinic appointments. We need to see you to make sure you are getting better.
- When your OPAT treatment is complete, the IV line is usually removed. This process is mostly quick, simple, and painless.

Lifestyle Management:

- Many daily activities can be resumed if your health is good enough; check with your doctor or nurse before starting anything, including going to work or exercise.
- You should stay away from activities that make you sweat, wet, or dirty, and avoid tugging or rubbing the site where the IV line is placed.
- The nurse who trains you can give you tips on how to bathe. You may shower, but you must keep the IV catheter site dry. You should never put the IV catheter under water, even if you think you have a water-tight dressing over it. When you bathe, you must completely cover your IV catheter and dressing with plastic wrap and tape, or a dressing cover such as Aquaguard.

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Hand Hygiene:

Wash your hands frequently. Do this after using the bathroom, before and after eating. Use plenty of soap and warm water.

When to Call Us:

Keep our phone numbers close by; you can call us or your home health nursing service at any time! Call us right away if you experience any of the following:

- Fever or chills
- Red streaks on your skin near the central line
- Swelling, hot skin, or pain near where the IV line enters your skin
- Any fluid draining from where the IV line enters your skin
- New rash or itching anywhere on your body
- Worsening pain at the infection site
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea (more than 3 liquid stools per day)
- The IV line dressing comes loose or comes off
- The IV line comes out of the vein by more than two inches

Go to the ER if:

- Bleeding from the IV Line that does not stop after 10 minutes of direct pressure

Who to Call:

- If you are in a skilled nursing facility, call the doctor taking care of you
- If you are at home, most home infusion companies have an on-call nurse 24/7
- Your ID team