

Outpatient parenteral antimicrobial therapy (OPAT) – your intravenous (IV) antibiotics at home

What is OPAT?

OPAT (outpatient parenteral antimicrobial therapy) is a method of giving antibiotics through a vein (intravenously or IV). It is used to treat infections in patients who are well enough to be discharged from hospital and can safely receive treatment out of hospital.

We are a team of clinical nurse specialists, pharmacists and doctors. All OPAT patients have their medical condition and therapy closely monitored, with regular blood tests and virtual reviews.

Receiving IV antibiotics at home, rather than as an inpatient, improves quality of life for patients and reduces the risk of hospital-acquired infection. Feedback from OPAT patients is overwhelmingly positive, citing the benefits of receiving treatment at home, and the care, support and expertise of the OPAT team.

How does the medication get into my vein?

A suitable venous access device (line) will be discussed and agreed with you as part of your plan of care. The Community IV Nursing Team will care for this with dressing changes and line care.

Who will give my IV antibiotics?

Intravenous antibiotics are delivered through a variety of ways depending on your local service. You may need to visit an infusion clinic, or a community IV nurse might come to your house to give your antibiotics. Some patients (or their carers) are keen to learn how to give the IV antibiotic themselves and the OPAT team can arrange training for this.

Will I need to see a doctor?

A letter will be sent to your GP when you start OPAT. If you need to see a doctor during your treatment regarding the infection we are treating, the OPAT team can arrange this either with a face-to-face review at Heartlands Hospital, or a telephone call.

Are there any risks to receiving IV treatment at home?

Medicines like antibiotics can sometimes cause stomach upsets such as diarrhoea or vomiting. Skin reactions such as rashes can also occur rarely. Some antibiotics have specific side effects – for further information, please refer to the instruction leaflet enclosed within your medication package.

If you have **any** side effects or reactions to your medicine, please tell your Community IV Nurse or contact the OPAT team on the numbers below.

Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is a rare, severe allergic reaction to a substance which your body perceives as a threat.

Symptoms often occur within minutes of exposure to the drug, but sometimes after hours.

They include:

- Generalised flushing of the skin
- Nettle rash (hives) anywhere on the body
- Swelling of the throat and mouth
- Difficulty in swallowing or speaking
- Alterations in heart rate
- Severe asthma
- Nausea and vomiting
- Sudden weakness or floppiness

Any of these symptoms are signs of a serious reaction. Dial 999 immediately.

What if I feel unwell?

If you experience **persistent diarrhoea, bruising, widespread rashes** or feel generally unwell (e.g. **fevers, shivering, shortness of breath or dizziness**), you should contact our team on the numbers in this leaflet within our working hours. Outside of these times, please seek medical assistance from your GP or dial 111. Severe or persistent diarrhoea could be a sign of an antibiotic-related gut infection that may require urgent treatment.

What will happen at the end of my treatment?

Usually, the Community IV Nurse will remove the line when your course of IV treatment is finished. In some cases, you may need to attend a hospital site for removal of your line. A dry sterile dressing will be applied, which you can remove after 24 hours. A letter will be sent to your GP to say that your course of IV treatment has finished and that you have been discharged from OPAT.

What happens if I am admitted to hospital whilst I am on treatment?

Please advise the medical team that you are currently receiving IV treatment under the OPAT team. Please bring any IV medication supplied for your OPAT treatment into hospital with you to minimise waste and highlight any items you wish to put in the fridge to your ward nurse.

What if I need to speak to someone?

In the event of questions related to visits (e.g. to check an approximate time of your community nurse visit) please contact the community teams on the appropriate number:

Birmingham	Solihull	Sciensus	South Staffordshire
0300 555 1919 option 2 (24 hours)	0121 717 4333 (24 hours)	0800 141 2598 (24 hours)	01827 306226 (24 hours)

For specific questions relating to your treatment plan, please contact the OPAT team:

Tel No: 07811 243298 or 0121 424 2175

or

Tel no: 07741 386075 or 0121 371 4975

Our working hours are 8am-4pm, Monday to Friday

Agreed expectations:

In consenting to treatment with OPAT, you are agreeing to the antibiotic plan that has been discussed with you. There are certain expectations that we request of you, and equally expectations you can expect of us. By agreeing to treatment with us, we request that you:

- escalate any concerns regarding your clinical condition to the Community IV Nurse or OPAT team
- be at home within the agreed allotted time for your visit from a Community IV Nurse unless in the event of an emergency
- do not attempt to access your vascular access device unless trained to do so
- make every attempt to engage with your care, including attending any follow-up appointments and scans

Our commitment to you:

- we will monitor you with a minimum of once weekly bloods, escalating any abnormalities to a senior clinician
- we will educate you on side effects to your antibiotic treatment
- we will be responsible for the prescribing, administering, monitoring and management of any adverse effects related to your antibiotic treatment

Accessibility

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