

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

If you know you're likely to receive an intravenous line (IV) there are some simple questions you can ask your health professional before, during and after that will help you be your own IV advocate.

“Why do I need an IV?”

Getting an IV is a routine procedure, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't ask questions. Before the process gets underway

Ask:

- › Why is this needed?
- › How will it help me?
- › How long will it be needed?

“What are the risks involved?”

All medical procedures carry some risk, and IVs are no exception.

Ask your medical team to outline the main risks, and then ask about how they lower the risks:

- › How do they monitor for infiltration?
- › How do they lower infection risks? What are the potential side effects?
- › What are their protocols if things go wrong?
- › Who can you reach out to if you feel like you need help?

“How can we make this more comfortable?”

Anxiety surrounding IV placement is common – 1 in 4 Americans has a fear of needles.¹

Before the procedure, ask:

- › How much should I hydrate before the line is placed?
- › Will you use a heated pack to make the veins more visible?
- › Can you apply a topical anesthetic so I'll feel less of a prick?

Don't be afraid to request to have a loved one or friend hold your hand, or anything else you might need for comfort. When we're stressed, we tend to breathe more rapidly, which can cause veins to constrict. Anything that keeps your anxiety level low will only make it easier on you and your medical team.

“What’s in my IV?”

Once the IV is set up, make sure you know what fluids or medications you are being given.

Ask:

- › What fluids are in my IV bag?
- › What do these fluids do?
- › If an IV push or bolus is ordered, ask: What’s in this syringe?

Remember:

- › If you don’t get responses that make you feel comfortably informed, don’t be afraid to ask for more information or to speak to other specialists.
- › If you are otherwise unable to ask questions, assign a family member or friend to monitor it on your behalf.

“What should I look out for?”

Medical staff should monitor your IV setup frequently, but give yourself an affirmative role in monitoring your own care.

Ask:

- › What are the signs of infiltration or extravasation?
- › Who should I alert if I notice pain, swelling, tingling, or other changes?

Remember:

- › Don’t be afraid to speak up if you feel any changes or have concerns. Even if it turns out to be nothing, you’ll have peace of mind.

“My IV treatment is done, now what?”

Once your treatment is finished, the IV will be removed and staff will dress the insertion site with a bandage.

Ask:

- › What do I need to look for in terms of redness, swelling, discomfort or discharge?
- › How long do I need to keep the site bandaged?
- › How often should I change dressings?
- › Who do I call if I see signs of infection or have other concerns?



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