

Going Home with a Cannula

What is a cannula?

A cannula is a very small, flexible tube which is placed into a vein, usually in the back of your child's hand or arm or sometimes in their foot.

One end sits inside the vein and the other end has a small valve that looks a bit like a tap. This is used to give medications or fluids directly into the bloodstream.

Why does my child need a cannula?

Your child needs a cannula because the medication they are being given needs to go straight into the bloodstream.

Some drugs are given over a period of a few minutes, which we call a bolus or push. Other medications are given over 30 minutes or longer using a special pump.

How is the cannula inserted?

First we will put some numbing cream or use cold spray on the area where we will try to insert the cannula. This helps to reduce the pain caused for your child when they have the cannula inserted. The numbing cream takes approximately 30 minutes to one hour to numb the area and will keep the area numbed for up to six hours afterwards. The cold spray works instantly.

The cannula is inserted into the vein using a needle and then this needle is removed leaving the plastic tube in the vein. The cannula will be held in place with a sticky dressing and bandage over the top. We sometimes use a plastic board called a splint to help keep the cannula secure and in place.

Do I need to do anything specific at home?

Try to keep the area where the cannula is clean and dry. When your child bathes or showers, you can place a plastic bag or glove over the cannula to keep it clean and dry.

Try to avoid your child pulling or knocking their cannula, taking care when dressing and removing your child's clothing.

How is the cannula removed?

Any bandages and dressings holding the cannula in place are removed; the plastic tube will then be pulled out gently. Some pressure will be applied over the exit site in case it bleeds.

A plaster can then be applied.

Removing the cannula should not cause any pain, however removing the sticky plaster often can be unpleasant.

What do I do if the cannula comes out at home?

If the cannula accidentally comes out, do not worry. Remove the rest of the dressing. If the site is bleeding then use some cotton wool or kitchen roll and apply some slight pressure on the area. Once it has stopped bleeding, you can cover it with a plaster.

If you have an appointment the next day, please telephone the relevant department in the morning to let them know what has happened.

What should I do if I have a problem?

If the site becomes painful, red, swollen, if it starts to bleed or leak or if your child develops a temperature, please contact us via the numbers below:

- **Monday – Friday 10am – 10pm Blue Sky Centre on 020 8725 0650/0503**
- **Outside of these hours, please call the Emergency Department on 020 8725 4264 for advice.**

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

