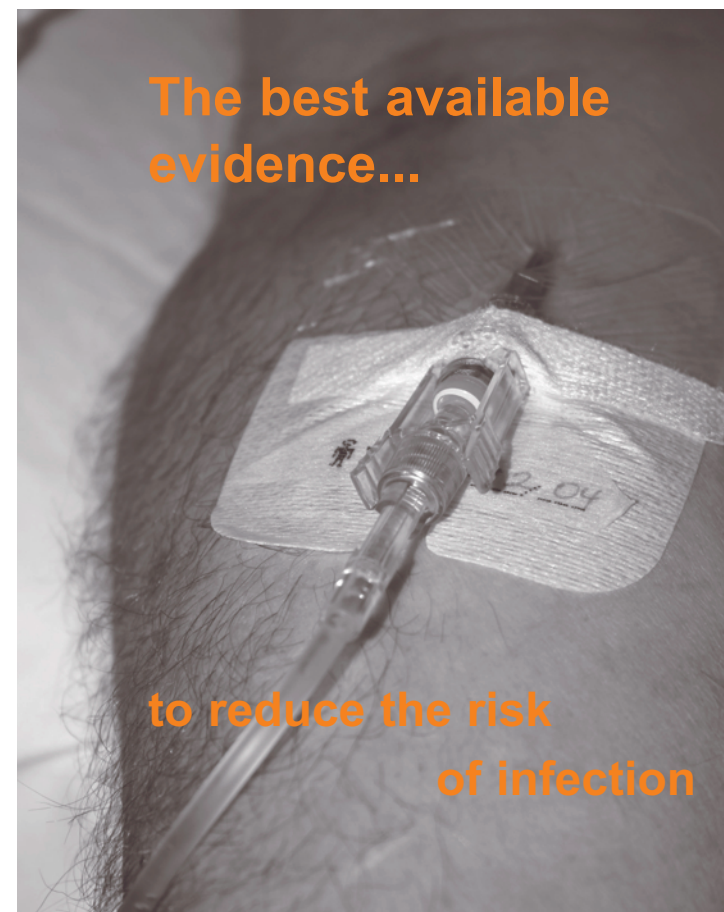




Management of IV Cannula's

Evidence Based Information Sheets for Consumers



The best available
evidence...

to reduce the risk
of infection

What is evidence based health information?

Just as a detective searches for evidence to solve a crime, so too do health professionals look for evidence to guide their practice. The detective must have evidence to support their case. In a similar fashion, the health care professional must have evidence to support their proposed course of treatment. They search for information that will help them to provide the most effective or beneficial form of care to their patients. Due to the wealth of information available to them, the process of discovering which information is the best can be difficult and time consuming. It would take an enormous amount of time for your doctor to sift through the large amounts of research and information available to them on a particular topic. This is where the Joanna Briggs Institute comes into play. We conduct the 'detective' work, providing them (and you) with the best available evidence.

Evidence Reliability

The evidence related to the topic of each consumer publication produced by the Joanna Briggs Institute is assessed for reliability and quality. We do not rate a procedure or treatment, but the evidence (or research) that is available to support it.

Evidence can play a critical role in any investigation and it is important for detectives to recognise evidence that will provide 'reliable' information to aid in the investigation. This is also the case when assessing health information, as some types of evidence are more reliable than others.

For Joanna Briggs Institute evidence based information for consumers, you can be assured that the best available evidence is utilised. If you would like more information about research and levels of evidence, please contact the Joanna Briggs Institute or visit the research page of our consumer web site.

"The procedures described in this pamphlet must only be used by people who have appropriate expertise in the field to which the procedure relates. The applicability of any information must be established before relying on it. While care has been taken to ensure that this pamphlet summarises available research and expert consensus, any loss, damage, cost, expense or liability suffered or incurred as a result of reliance on these procedures (whether arising in contract, negligence or otherwise) is, to the extent permitted by law, excluded".

What does this mean for consumers?

As consumers of health care it is important to know that your treatment is being based on the best available evidence. It is also important that you are provided with all of the information in order to have greater independence in relation to your own health care decisions and to be involved in the decision making process.

Further information

The Joanna Briggs Institute Consumer Information Program provides up to date literature reviews to ensure your information is based on the best available evidence. The Institute also produces systematic reviews and Best Practice Information sheets aimed at clinicians and health professionals. This means you are provided with the same high standard of publications based on the same information as those working directly in the field.

Contact details

The Joanna Briggs Institute has collaborating centres throughout Australia and overseas. If you would like more information on the Institute, its publications or wish to contact a Joanna Briggs Institute collaborating centre near you, please visit our web site:

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About IV Cannulas

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide you with the best available evidence on reducing the risk of infection for intravascular cannulas.

What is a cannula?

An intravascular cannula (also called a 'jelco' or 'drip') is a tube that is inserted into a blood vessel. They are a common and important part of hospital practice and are used to give fluid, nutrients, medications and blood products. They are also used to monitor circulation.

What are the risks?

While they are commonly used, having a cannula inserted can lead to a variety of infections. The most important complication is phlebitis (an inflamed vein that can be identified by swelling and redness around the cannula).

There are a number of things that can increase the chance of getting an infection. These include:

- Hands and equipment that are not clean
- Equipment and dressings not changed frequently

All of these things can lead to germs infecting the site and if left untreated these germs can make you quite ill. However, there are things that can be done when the cannula is inserted and during care that can stop this from happening.

References

This consumer information sheet has been based on a systematic review and *Best Practice* Information sheet undertaken by the Joanna Briggs Institute under the guidance of a review panel of clinical experts.

The Joanna Briggs Institute (1998) Management of Peripheral Intravascular Devices, Vol 2, Issue 1

Insertion

The location of a cannula will vary. Usually it will be inserted in the wrist or forearm. However, the location will depend on the individual patient's circumstances. The cannula should not generally be inserted where there is a join in the limb and they are rarely inserted in lower limbs as there is a greater risk of infection.

Good handwashing is important before inserting a cannula. Once your doctor or nurse has done this they will place a band around your arm to help to find a 'good' vein. They will make sure the area is clean and may need to clip hairs. A small needle is then used to insert the cannula. The needle is removed, leaving only the cannula in place.

You may feel some pressure or brief discomfort when the cannula is inserted and you may request a local anaesthetic be used to reduce this discomfort.

Care

Your cannula will have a dressing placed over the top to keep it clean and in place. Showering and bathing is okay, but it is important to make sure that your cannula does not get knocked. If the dressing starts to lift or peel you should let your doctor or nurse know, so that they can replace it.

Once your cannula is in place, you should feel no discomfort. Patients are encouraged to report any symptoms such as pain, burning, swelling or bleeding as these may mean that the site is infected or that the cannula is no longer sitting in the vein.

Your cannula should be replaced on a regular basis to help prevent infection (usually every 2 to 3 days). Cannulas should also be removed as soon as they are no longer needed and at the first sign of infection.

The evidence suggests...

Cleaning

Skin should be cleaned with antiseptic before insertion.

Hand washing

Hands should be washed before insertion and during care your doctor or nurse should also wear gloves.

Dressings

Sterile gauze or transparent dressings should be used (dressings should be replaced when the cannula is replaced or when the dressing becomes damp, loose or dirty).

Replacement

The cannula and tubing should be replaced regularly (every 2 to 3 days). If your cannula was inserted in an emergency it should be replaced (within 24 hours).

Your cannula should also be 'flushed' on a regular basis, but this will vary in different settings – there is no standard.

Check for infection

If you experience warmth, tenderness, redness, itching or other irritation tell your doctor or nurse as soon as possible.