

Cystic **Fibrosis** *our focus*

Home intravenous (IV) therapy

Introduction

Courses of IV antibiotics at home can be a standard feature in the treatment of cystic fibrosis (CF), however some people prefer to receive these in hospital. This factsheet explains how home IV therapy works, summarising the advantages and disadvantages of each method and highlighting some practical considerations for both hospital and home IV antibiotics.

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Should I opt for home or hospital IV therapy?

You can receive a course of IV antibiotics in two ways:

- starting in the hospital clinic or ward and continued at home, or
- in hospital for the entire duration of the treatment.

As a patient, your individual needs may change over time. Your CF nurse or doctor will discuss the following factors with you when deciding which of the two options is most suitable:

- your condition,
- the availability of your family and professional support,
- geographical location
- personal needs, and
- your preferences.

Sometimes your CF team may recommend you receive all or part of your IV course in hospital, perhaps if you have had a significant drop in lung function or need increased physiotherapy support to get the most out of your treatment.

The antibiotics are delivered to the vein via a 'short' cannula, midlines, longlines or 'ports'.

Learning how to do home IV therapy

Qualified and experienced nurses or doctors can teach patients and carers how to safely prepare and dispose of equipment required for IV antibiotic treatment and ensure competence in venous access and administration of the medication. A named person will be assigned to assess progress.

You'll receive basic life-support education and full instructions on what to do if you experience an allergic reaction (anaphylaxis). Some hospitals may issue an EpiPen, which is a self-administered injection of adrenaline in case of such a reaction.

You may have already had IV antibiotics and be familiar with the procedure. Teaching programmes are tailored to suit your needs and you'll learn at your own pace. It's essential that you or your carer are confident and competent before home therapy is considered.

Reassessment may be necessary, particularly if IV antibiotic courses are infrequent or drug therapy has changed.

Practical considerations

You will need a cool, clean, dry shelf or cupboard out of reach of children and pets to store your drugs and equipment. Some drugs may need to be stored in a fridge – your pharmacist or CF nurse will advise you of this.

Simple, user-friendly instructions should be issued to back up your teaching programme by your nurse or doctor. This should contain a section on dealing with problems.

Medication and supplies are issued by the hospital pharmacy or a home IV provider. Your CF team will let you know the setup in your area.

Arrangements will be made for enough equipment to be issued to complete the course. A 'sharps' bin is required for safe disposal of needles, syringes and other sharp items, and this must be sealed on completion.

Information on disposal and/or collections of the box and any other items of equipment will be given by your nurse or doctor.

Monitoring and follow-up of home IV courses may involve home visits, phone calls or clinic appointments. Some drugs require a blood test to check dosage is correct; again, you will be advised of this. You will need to be available for any follow-up care necessary to ensure treatment is both safe and effective.

Reactions to drugs

Reactions to drugs can occur, which is why the first dose of any new drug is given in hospital under medical supervision.

If you experience any of the following problems, you should stop the course and seek immediate advice from the 24-hour contact number provided by the hospital initiating the IV therapy:

- rashes
- nausea
- severe diarrhoea
- temperature
- vomiting
- swelling
- any other unusual symptoms

Severe reactions are very rare but must be treated as an emergency by calling an ambulance and going to the emergency department. These will include:

- sudden collapse or illness
- severe difficulty breathing
- swelling around the neck

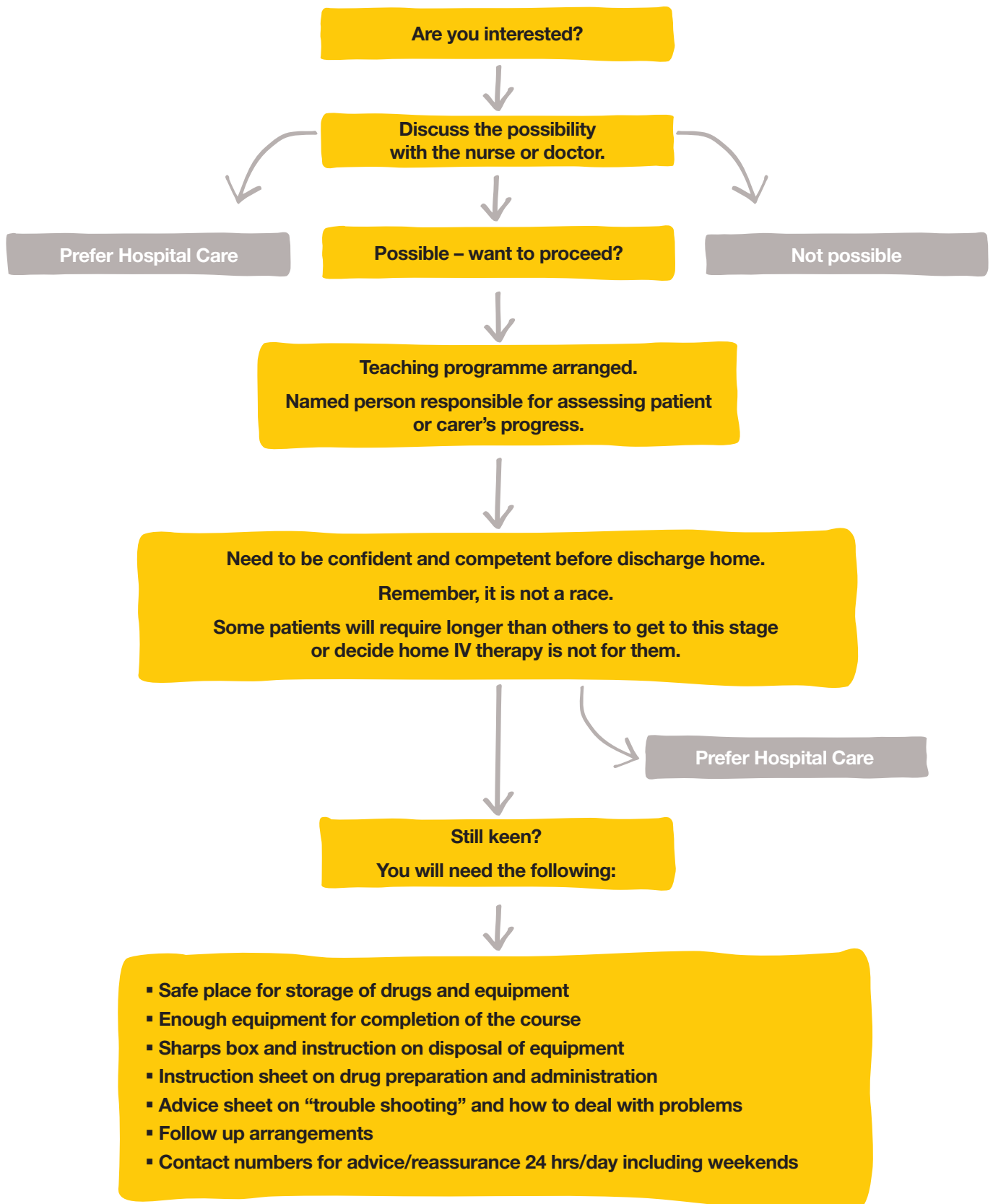
Your CF centre will provide special training and/or emergency medication (anaphylaxis kit) to deal with a severe allergic reaction.

Work/education

It may be possible to continue with employment or education whilst having a course of IV antibiotics and this can be discussed with the nurse or doctor initiating the course of therapy. However physiotherapy, good nutrition and adequate rest are all essential towards achieving the best outcome from an IV antibiotic course.

Similarly, drug times may be adjusted to accommodate these activities. In some cases drug administration is possible at work or school (by patient, carer or trained nurse within school). It is advisable to inform your employer or school that an IV line is in place and an antibiotic course in progress as their permission may be required for health and safety reasons. In every case, good communication between all those involved is essential.

Steps to successful home IV courses



Further information

The Cystic Fibrosis Trust provides information about cystic fibrosis through our factsheets, leaflets and other publications.

Most of our publications are available through our helpline and can be downloaded from our website or ordered using our online publications order form. Visit cysticfibrosis.org.uk/publications.

The Cystic Fibrosis Trust helpline can help you with a range of issues, no matter how big or small. Our trained staff can provide a listening ear, practical advice, welfare/benefits information or direct you to other sources of support. The helpline can be contacted on 0300 373 1000 or helpline@cysticfibrosis.org.uk and is open Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm.

Calls to 0300 numbers cost no more than 5p per minute from a standard BT residential landline. Charges from other landlines and mobile networks may vary, but will be no more than a standard geographic call and are included in all inclusive minutes and discount schemes. If you are worried about the cost of the call please let us know and we'll call you back.

You can also find more information at our website cysticfibrosis.org.uk.

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More factsheets available at:
cysticfibrosis.org.uk/publications

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The information included in this publication is not intended to replace any advice you may receive from your doctor or CF multidisciplinary team and it is important that you seek medical advice whenever considering a change of treatment.

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