

# IV line infection

An intravenous (IV) line is a small plastic tube that goes into your vein. It is used to give you blood, fluids or medicine.

An IV line is also known as a cannula or drip. A needle is used to put the line through your skin into your vein.

## How you get an IV line infection

An IV line creates a small hole in your skin. There is a risk that bacteria will travel along the tube and into your body.

IV lines are useful but can cause problems. They can become blocked, leak fluid into the skin and cause infection.

## Preventing an IV line infection

It is OK to ask a doctor or nurse:

- if you really need an IV line - if you do not have an IV line, you're less at risk of getting an infection
- to clean their hands before they put in or touch your IV line
- to clean your skin before putting the IV line in
- if you still need an IV line in - the longer it's in, the greater the risk of infection

It is OK to ask someone caring for you to clean their hands.

## Symptoms of an IV line infection

Symptoms of IV line infection include:

- pain where your IV line is
- redness or swelling near the IV line
- crusting or scabbing appears on skin near your IV line
- oozing fluid, blood or pus from where the IV line goes through your skin

## ⚠ Important

Talk to your doctor or nurse straight away if you notice any of these symptoms.

### Bloodstream infection

[Sepsis](#) (bloodstream infection) is a serious infection. It happens when bacteria spread to your blood.

Bloodstream infection can cause:

- a high temperature
- chills
- nausea (feeling sick)
- weakness

Tell your doctor or nurse straight away if you notice any of the above.

### Causes of an IV line infection

An IV line is more likely to cause an infection in people who are already very sick.

There are lots of people in hospital with infections or superbugs. It's easy for these to spread in hospital.

### Treatment of an IV line infection

Your doctor or nurse will talk to you about taking out the IV line and any treatment you might need. This may include [antibiotics](#).

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