

## Patient information

# Outpatient Parenteral Antimicrobial Therapy (OPAT) Service

Antibiotics are used to treat many types of bacterial infections. In some conditions they can be given directly into a vein, which are known as intravenous antibiotics (IV), these can be more effective than tablet antibiotics in reducing the level of infection that has occurred. IV antibiotics are usually given to patients in hospital, but they can also be given safely by a team of nurses in your home.

### How will the antibiotic be given?

The antibiotic will be given into your vein via an intravenous access device (IVAD), which will be inserted while you are in hospital. An IVAD may be a PICC line (see associated leaflet "Patient Information – PICC Line"), or an intravenous cannula, which is a small flexible plastic tube inserted into a vein. You will be given a specific leaflet about your line and how to look after it.

### How long will I have the antibiotic for?

The length of time you will be on the antibiotics will be decided by your hospital Consultant. When you leave the ward you will be given an out-patient appointment, where your Consultant will review your response to the antibiotics and whether they should continue. Although an initial duration may be prescribed, this may be lengthened or shortened if your doctor feels you would benefit from a change in your treatment plan. For the duration of your antibiotic treatment you will remain under the care of your hospital Consultant.

### Will I be required to collect the antibiotics?

You will be discharged with a week's supply of medication. Depending on the length of your treatment, this will be re-issued through the hospital pharmacy when you are seen in clinic. If your course of antibiotics continues for many weeks, you may be required to collect the antibiotics from the hospital or, if specific arrangements are made, your GP surgery.

Please be aware that you will need to keep the medication at room temperature, and that you should keep all medication and equipment away from children and pets.

## What happens if I feel unwell or I have a problem?

All medicines, including antibiotics, can have side-effects. Some common things to look out for include:

- Skin reactions such as rashes
- Stomach upsets such as diarrhoea or nausea
- Fever, feeling hot/cold, high temperature

Any of these concerns can be discussed with your community nurse for advice or contact the Care Coordination Centre (CCC) on **0300 123 2425** who will inform the community intervention team. If no community nurses are attending, then contact the OPAT team (numbers provided in your care 'Care Plan').

In very rare cases some people may have an extreme allergic reaction to their medication. This is called anaphylaxis. Symptoms of anaphylaxis include:

- Flushing of the skin
- Nettle rash (hives) anywhere on the skin
- Swelling of the throat and mouth
- Difficulty in swallowing or speaking
- Alterations in heart rate, palpitations
- Severe asthma
- Abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting
- Sudden weakness or floppiness

**If you experience any of the above symptoms you should dial 999 and explain that you are receiving IV antibiotics and think you may be having an allergic reaction.**

**For advice on delivery or receipt of IV antibiotics:**

Contact WSH PHARMACY on **01284 713232**