

# Parenteral Nutrition

Information and advice for patients

## *Nutrition and Dietetics*

### **What is parenteral nutrition?**

Parenteral nutrition is where you are given all the nutrition you need through a small plastic tube into a large vein in your neck or chest (central venous catheter/central line). The nutrients are delivered directly into your bloodstream.

### **What are the benefits of parenteral nutrition?**

At the moment your digestive system is not working as it should be and is unable to absorb adequate nutrients that your body needs to keep healthy. The benefit of parenteral nutrition is that it will provide all the nutrients your body needs to stay healthy whilst you are unable to eat, essentially providing you with a balanced diet.

### **What are the risks of parenteral nutrition?**

- The main risk is infection of the line through which the nutrition is given. To reduce this risk it is important to avoid touching or handling the line unnecessarily. If the dressing becomes dirty, wet or loose, please ask your nurse to change it as soon as possible. Your temperature and the site where the line is inserted will be checked regularly for any signs of infection.
- High blood glucose (sugar) can also occur. This will be monitored regularly by testing urine samples or finger prick blood samples and will be treated if needed.
- There is a risk that the function of your kidneys or liver could change. For this reason you will have regular blood tests whilst receiving parenteral nutrition so any changes can be monitored and treated as needed.

### **What are the risks of not having parenteral nutrition?**

If you are advised to have parenteral nutrition, the risk of declining it is that your body will not receive the nutrients it needs to function properly.

### **Are there any alternatives?**

There are no alternative ways of providing the nutrition your body needs whilst your digestive system is not functioning as no other methods bypass the digestive system.

### **How is the nutrition given?**

A small plastic tube called a central venous catheter, or central line, will be inserted through your skin into a large vein in your neck or chest. This will be done by a trained radiologist or anaesthetist.

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### **What does the parenteral nutrition contain?**

- Glucose - provides energy
- Proteins – essential for growth, healing and maintenance of tissues
- Fats – maintain energy stores
- Vitamins – keep the body healthy and functioning correctly
- Minerals – help to make blood cells and important for healing and muscle function
- Fluid – to maintain hydration

### **Can I still eat or drink whilst on parenteral nutrition?**

Whether you can eat and drink or not will depend on your medical condition; your doctors or the nutrition team will discuss this with you

Parenteral nutrition usually satisfies the appetite for most people however your mouth may feel dry so it is important to clean your teeth regularly. Mouthwashes can also help.

### **How long is the parenteral nutrition attached for?**

To begin with, parenteral nutrition will be given continuously over 24 hours. Once you are stable on it, the amount of time it needs to be given for may be altered to give you more freedom.

### **Will I still be able to move around?**

You will still be able to move around and your movement should not be restricted too much. The pump and feed will hang on a mobile stand, and the pump will have a battery facility that will last for several hours.

### **Will I be able to take a bath or shower?**

You will be able to have a bath or shower but do not get the catheter or dressing too wet. If the dressing does get wet you must ask the nurse to change it as soon as possible.

### **Will my bowel habits change?**

Parenteral nutrition goes straight into the bloodstream but you will still produce bowel movements (poo) from mucus, cells and bacteria. Parenteral nutrition should not cause diarrhoea or pain.

### **How will I be monitored?**

Whilst receiving parenteral nutrition we will monitor your progress carefully to make sure that your body is tolerating it and you have not developed an infection:

- The nutrition team will visit you each working day to monitor your progress, ensure things are running smoothly and answer any questions you have about this treatment.

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Information and advice for patients

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The team consists of a specialist nutrition nurse, dietitian, pharmacist and consultant.

- You will have daily blood tests for the first week or so, which may continue if you are unwell.
- Your temperature, pulse, blood pressure and blood glucose levels will be checked regularly throughout the day.
- The nurses will keep a strict record of your fluid intake and output so that we can ensure you are receiving the correct amount of fluid.
- You will be weighed twice a week.
- Depending on your condition, you may have other specialist teams monitoring your progress (IV Team etc).

## **How long will I need parenteral nutrition for?**

The length of time you need parenteral nutrition for will depend on your specific condition. Your nutrition team will be able to give you an idea of how long you may need it for.

## **Contact details**

If you have any questions or concerns about parenteral nutrition please ask the ward nurse to contact a nutrition nurse or dietitian for you using the extension numbers below:

### **Nutrition Nurse Specialist**

Ext. 3864 (Sandwell hospital)

Ext. 5737 (City hospital)

### **Dietitians**

Ext. 3521 (Sandwell hospital)

Ext. 4085 (City hospital)

## **Further information**

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website:

**Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust**

[www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk)

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### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- Radcliffe Medical Press, 'Nutritional support for adults and children', 2004
- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 'Nutrition support in adults', February 2006
- Blackwell publishing, 'Central venous access devices: care and management', March 2007

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: [swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net)



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