

Outpatient Parenteral Antimicrobial Therapy (OPAT) Service

Information for patients

This leaflet aims to provide you with information about the OPAT service. If you have further questions, please speak to the OPAT clinical nurse specialist (CNS) or doctor.

What is OPAT?

OPAT is Outpatient Parenteral (also known as intravenous) Antimicrobial Therapy. This is a method of giving antibiotics and other similar medicines through a vein to treat infections in patients who are well enough to be discharged from hospital and can safely receive treatment in their own home.

Why do I need OPAT?

Your doctor has recommended you have antibiotics to treat your infection. In your case, the doctor has recommended that the antibiotics are given through the vein (intravenously (IV)). This may be because the antibiotic does not exist as a tablet or because you need a high dose of the antibiotic

What are the benefits of OPAT?

You will be able to go home to a comfortable and familiar setting rather than staying in the hospital. OPAT is not always the right choice for everyone but feedback from previous OPAT patients has shown that they would choose it again over a prolonged hospital stay. It can also allow you to maintain your independence, be back with your family and friends or even return to work.

Are there any alternatives?

You will not be discharged onto the OPAT service if you do not wish to be. If you choose not to, we will discuss alternative options.

How will the IV antibiotic be given?

IV medicines need to be given through a tiny flexible plastic tube (IV line or vascular access device) that is inserted into the vein. It is usually inserted while you are in hospital and kept in for as long as you need the IV antibiotics. The IV line should not be painful once it is in place.

Your antibiotics can either be given through an elastomeric device which is prefilled and ready to use or by reconstituting it in an infusion bag using a needle and syringe.

Who will give the IV antibiotic?

If you would like to learn how to give the IV antibiotic yourself, we can arrange training for this. Otherwise, a nurse will come to your house each day (or twice daily) and give you the IV antibiotic. This will either be our independent homecare nursing team or a district nurse who is based at a GP surgery or hospital@home team.

The independent homecare nursing team is called Bionical, and is part of Baxter, our independent homecare team provider.

What should I expect if I go home with an elastomeric device?

You can go home a day before the delivery of your antibiotics at home. You will be contacted by our independent homecare team (usually by text message from the Polar Speed delivery company or a call) for the following:

- medication fridge delivery
- supplies delivery
- visit schedule for your antibiotic's administration or for your self-administration training

You will also receive a call from our OPAT pathway coordinator about your clinic appointment which is usually followed by a text message confirming details of your appointment with our Infectious Diseases Team. For any questions regarding the deliveries and the nursing schedule please call Baxter on 0800 0288 966.

What should I expect if I go home with antibiotics that need reconstitution?

In most cases, we will train you to self-administer your antibiotics while you are still in the hospital. You will be given an information leaflet for self-administration and the OPAT CNSs will train and assess you to do it safely.

If not, you will be going home either through the district nursing or the hospital@home team who will do the preparation and administration of your antibiotics. They will contact you to schedule the visit. You will be provided with the following before you go home:

- your antibiotics
- supplies for administration from your ward or from our independent homecare team Baxter – you will receive a text message if the supplies come from Baxter

How do I look after the IV line?

A clean, transparent (see through) dressing will be applied over the line to prevent the risk of infection. This will be changed weekly. Our OPAT CNSs and homecare nurses can then make sure there aren't any early indications of an infection. If your dressing becomes sloppy, soiled, or unclean, you should inform one of your homecare nurses.

You can have showers or baths with your IV line inserted, but you must make sure that the IV line dressing is kept dry. Swimming or other water sports should be avoided. You should also avoid lifting heavy objects and contact sports as this can sometimes make the IV line move out of position.

How long will it take for the IV antibiotic to be given at home?

Some antibiotics can be given by a slow 5 minute injection, but other antibiotics take 30 to 60 minutes. Patients are usually offered antibiotics in a small elastomeric device which will be attached for either 1 hour or 24 hours. Patients who are getting antibiotics through an elastomeric device can still do most normal activities while attached to this device.

How many times a day will I need to get the IV antibiotic?

Most patients only get the intravenous antibiotic once a day, but a few patients may need the antibiotic twice a day. It is rare for IV antibiotics to be given more than twice a day through the OPAT service.

How long is the treatment?

The length of your treatment depends on the type of infection, it can be weeks or months. Your doctors will explain how long you will need the antibiotics before you start OPAT, but please be aware this may change depending on your response to treatment.

How often will I see the hospital doctors?

You will need to come to the hospital for an outpatient appointment with the OPAT team on a Wednesday morning. The clinic is held in the Caldecot Centre which is in a separate building to the main hospital on Caldecot Road. Some patients may be offered a telephone appointment instead of attending the OPAT clinic in person.

You will also need to attend occasional hospital appointments with a doctor from the team who looked after you while you were in hospital.

What are the risks?

There are very few risks as you will already have received at least one or two doses of your antibiotic in hospital to ensure that there is low risk of you developing an allergic reaction.

On rare occasions, individuals may experience issues that are directly linked to the antibiotics they are taking.

Here are some of the common things to look out for:

- rash
- diarrhoea
- fever
- feeling hot or cold
- high temperature
- pain
- redness and swelling around the IV line or cannula (may appear as purplish discoloration on dark coloured skin)
- blocked IV line or cannula

Please call us on one of the numbers listed below if you experience any of the symptoms at home, so that we can treat you.

If the IV line falls out, use cotton wool or a tissue and put pressure on the site until the bleeding stops. You must then contact the OPAT CNS on 020 3299 8593, 020 3299 7021 or 020 3299 2165 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). Out of hours, please use 0800 0288 966 to contact the independent homecare team. If the bleeding does not stop, call 111 or if there is extreme bleeding dial 999 or go to your closest emergency department (A&E).

If you experience any of the following medical emergencies, dial 999 for an ambulance or go to the accident and emergency (A&E) department that is closest to you:

- chest pain
- swelling of lips and face
- difficulty in breathing

What to do if?

The elastomeric device leaks or bursts

- Immediately clamp your IV line.
- Disconnect the elastomeric device and clamp the device tubing or replace the cap at the end of the device tubing.
- Immediately call the OPAT CNS (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) or Baxter (evenings, weekends and bank holidays).
- If the antibiotics comes into contact with your skin, immediately wash it off with soap and water.
- **Do not throw away the elastomeric pump.** This will be collected from your house.

The elastomeric device does not infuse

- Check your IV line or the elastomeric pump if it's clamped or kinked.
- If your antibiotics is for 1 hour and it still has not infused – call OPAT CNS (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) or Baxter (evenings, weekends and bank holidays).
- If your antibiotics is for 24 hours, you will be given an infusion progress chart. Check the 5 Hours mark. If it does not look like what it should be, call OPAT CNS (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) or Baxter (evenings, weekends and bank holidays).
- **Do not throw away the elastomeric pump.** This will be collected from your house.

I see some bubbles on my IV line

- A very small bubble will not cause any problems.
- If you noticed that there are multiple bubbles on your IV line and are concerned, clamp the IV line and call OPAT CNS (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) or Baxter (evenings, weekends and bank holidays).

Accidentally removed the needle free connector from my line

- Immediately clamp your IV line.
- **Do not reattach the needle free connector.**
- Call OPAT CNS (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) or Baxter (evenings, weekends and bank holidays).

Who to contact?

OPAT CNSs on **020 3299 8593**, **020 3299 7021** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

For information about appointments, please email the **OPAT admin team**: kch-tr.opat.admin@nhs.net or call **020 3299 2165 (OPAT Pathway Coordinator)**

Baxter (the independent homecare team, including nursing team Bionical) provide a 24-hour helpline to support with antibiotic administration, deliveries, supplies and homecare nurses, please call **0800 0288 966**.

In an **emergency**, please call **111** or **999** for an ambulance or go to your nearest emergency unit (A&E).

Sharing your information

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS
Tel: 020 3299 3601
Email: kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Communications and Interpreting telephone line on 020 3299 4826 or email kch-tr.accessibility@nhs.net