

# **Cystic** **Fibrosis** *our focus*

**Home intravenous therapy**

Factsheet – March 2013

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# Home intravenous therapy

## Introduction

Regular courses of intravenous (IV) antibiotics at home can be a routine feature in the treatment of cystic fibrosis (CF), however many patients prefer to receive IV antibiotics in hospital. This factsheet explains how home IVs work, summarises the advantages and disadvantages of both methods, and highlights some practical considerations for both hospital and home intravenous antibiotics.

Reviewed and updated by the Scottish CF Nurses Group.

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## Should I opt for home or hospital IV therapy?

IV courses can be given in the following ways:

- started in hospital and completed at home
- started in hospital and completed in hospital for the duration

Patients have individual needs that may change. Deciding the best place to receive intravenous antibiotic treatment is influenced by the patient's condition, availability of family and professional support, geographical location and personal needs and preferences. This will all be discussed with your CF nurse or doctor.

The antibiotics can be delivered to the veins via a 'short' cannulae, midlines or 'ports' as appropriate.

## Learning how to do home IV therapy

Teaching the patient or carer how to safely prepare, administer and dispose of equipment required for IV antibiotic treatment, together with the care of venous access is carried out by suitably qualified and experienced nurses or doctors, with a named person responsible for assessing progress.

Basic life support education should be in place, an EpiPen should be issued and full anaphylaxis instructions should be in place for each IV course.

Many patients will have had IV antibiotics in the past and already be familiar with the procedure.

Teaching programmes are tailored for individuals at their own pace. It is essential that the patient or carer is both competent and confident before home IV 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.

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

However, should 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
- any other unusual symptoms
- temperature
- vomiting
- swelling

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.

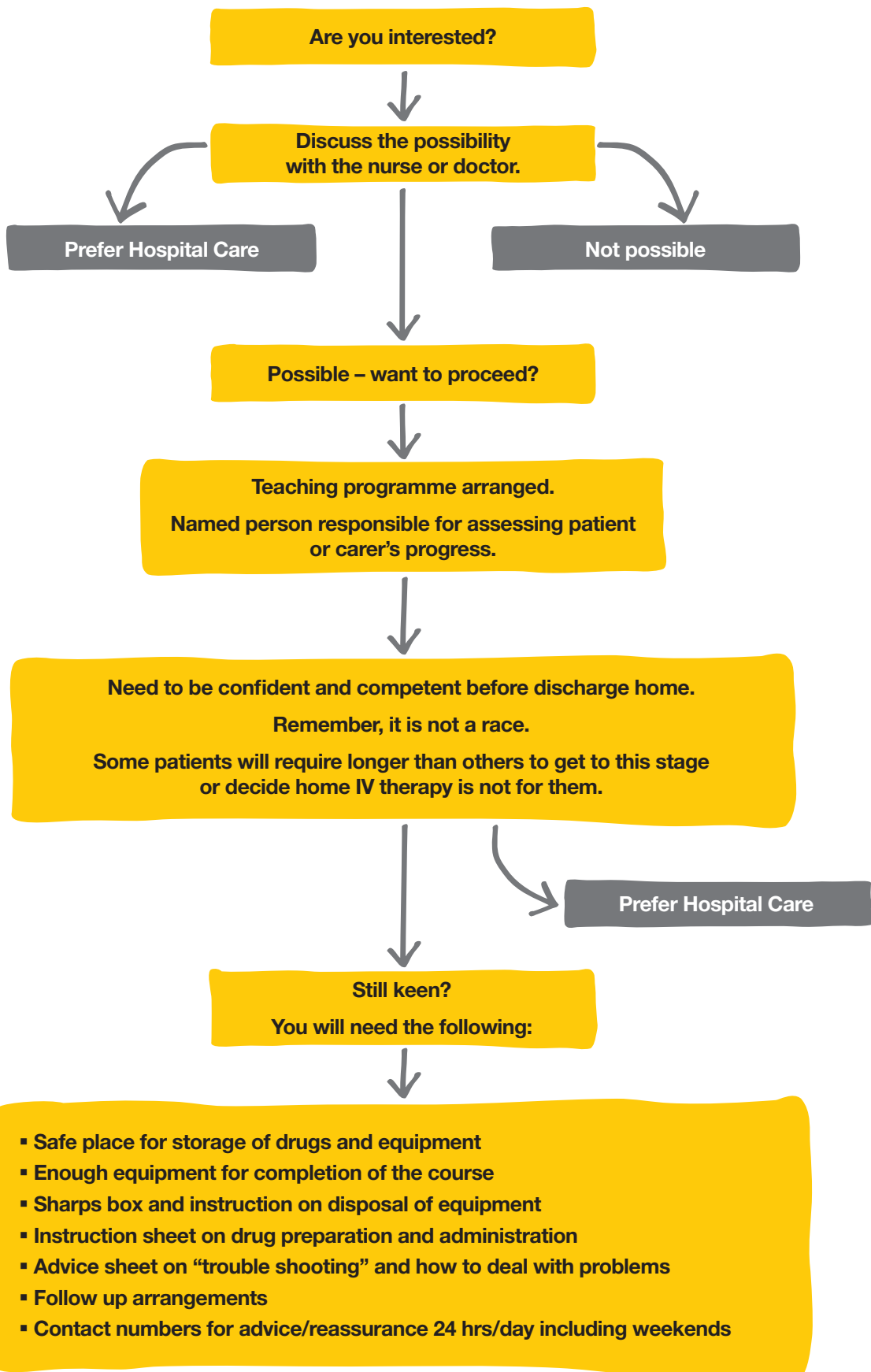
It may be possible to continue with employment or education whilst having a course of IV antibiotics and this can be discussed with the nurse or doctor initiating the course of therapy. However physiotherapy, good nutrition and adequate rest are all essential towards achieving the best outcome from an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

See Graphic  
on the next page



## 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 can be downloaded from our website or ordered using our online publications order form.

Visit [www.cysticfibrosis.org.uk/publications](http://www.cysticfibrosis.org.uk/publications).

Alternatively, to order hard copies of our publications you can telephone the CF Trust on 020 8464 7211.

If you would like further information about cystic fibrosis please contact:

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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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