

Antibiotic Outpatient Parenteral Therapy (OPAT) Service

This leaflet aims to provide you with information about the OPAT service. Please note that this information does not apply to our @home service. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is Outpatient Parenteral Antibiotic Therapy (OPAT)?

Antibiotics are used to fight against infections caused by bacteria. They can be given orally (by mouth) or injected into a vein. When antibiotics are injected, it is called intravenous (IV) or parenteral therapy. After consultation with the infectious diseases doctor, it has been decided that IV antibiotics are the best course of treatment for you. IV antibiotics are usually given to patients in hospital but they can be given safely in an outpatient clinic or at home.

When given in a clinic or at home, this is called OPAT (Outpatient Parenteral Antibiotic Therapy). If you are receiving OPAT at home then a nurse will visit your home daily to give you the dose or you (or a family member or friend) will be taught how to give the antibiotics.

How is the antibiotic given?

The antibiotic is given into your vein through a small narrow flexible tube called a catheter or IV line. The IV line is inserted into a vein using a needle. The needle is removed and the IV line is left in place and secured by a dressing.

There are different types of IV lines available and the one chosen for your treatment will depend on your veins and how long you will need the antibiotics. You will be given further information about the IV line used in your treatment and how to care for it by the OPAT nurse. Before you are discharged from hospital you will be given a plan for what to do if there are any issues with the IV line.

Who decides if I should go onto OPAT?

Patients being considered for the OPAT service will be those who are ready to go home, but who need further IV antibiotic treatment. If the medical/surgical team looking after you think that you are suitable for the service then they will refer you to the OPAT team.

An OPAT nurse and infectious diseases doctor will meet with you to assess you and decide if you are suitable. The OPAT process will be fully explained to you so you can decide whether it is something that you would like to consider. If you decide to go onto the OPAT service then arrangements will be made to make sure you are able to go home safely.

Do I have to go onto the OPAT service?

You will not be discharged onto the OPAT service if you do not wish to be. If you choose not to go onto the OPAT service we will discuss alternative options for your treatment with you.

What are the benefits of the OPAT service to me?

You will be able to be at home in 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 rather than a prolonged hospital stay. It allows you to maintain your independence, be back with your family and friends or even return to work.

What are the risks to me?

You will receive at least one dose of your antibiotic in hospital to ensure that you do not develop a severe reaction. Allergic reactions can occur with any medicine and therefore you should seek immediate medical attention if you develop any symptoms whilst at home such as a rash, facial swelling or difficulty in breathing.

Occasionally the IV line can become blocked or an infection can develop. If there are any problems then contact the OPAT team (see end of this leaflet for details) and you will be rapidly assessed and if necessary readmitted back into hospital. In an emergency please call 999 for an ambulance or go to your nearest emergency (A&E) department.

Who will give me the IV antibiotics and care for my line?

The OPAT service will be tailored to your needs. Most community teams provide nurses that can visit you in your home and administer your antibiotic. This however may not always be possible depending on the course of treatment that is determined to be best for you.

When this happens some patients choose to give themselves the antibiotic, or a family member/friend will take on this role. Some patients decide that this is the option they would prefer anyway as they then have control of their treatment. If this is the case then you or your family member/friend will be taught how to do this and assessed in hospital by the OPAT team.

Another option is to come to hospital on a daily basis to be given the antibiotic in a hospital clinic. These options will be discussed with you and you will decide with the team which treatment type is best for you. You will receive a supply of your IV antibiotics and other supplies needed when you are discharged from hospital.

How long will my treatment last?

You may require only a few more days of IV treatment or several weeks or months, depending on the nature of the infection. Often this may be followed by a further course of oral antibiotics. The infectious diseases doctor will explain to you how long you will need treatment for. During your time on the OPAT service you will be under the supervision of our OPAT team, who will review your progress each week at the OPAT clinic.

When do I need to come to the OPAT clinic?

While on the OPAT programme you will need to attend a weekly clinic for review by an OPAT specialist nurse and doctor. The main OPAT clinic is held every Wednesday morning in the Chest Clinic, 2nd floor, Bermondsey Wing, Guy's Hospital from 9am to 12.30pm. If you have other reasons to attend the hospital, it may be possible to combine the appointments so the OPAT team can see you outside the Wednesday clinic.

An appointment will be made for you in advance. If you need assistance getting to the clinic, you can arrange transport by calling the transport assessment centre on 020 7188 2888.

At the clinic appointment, your IV line will be reviewed and the dressings changed. The OPAT nurse will take blood samples to monitor your therapy. This is to ensure that you are responding to treatment and that the IV line is maintained appropriately. You may also receive a dose of antibiotic if attending clinic means that you will miss your community practitioner's visit at home. If there are any issues with attending your weekly appointment you must contact the OPAT clinical nurse specialist (see end of this leaflet for details).

What do I need to bring with me to the OPAT clinic?

Please bring a list of the medicines you are taking each day. The OPAT nurse will tell you in advance if you need to bring a dose of IV antibiotics for them to administer.

Where do I get my ongoing supplies of medicine from?

You will be provided with following week's intravenous medications each week in clinic. The OPAT team, not your GP, will be responsible for your intravenous antibiotic prescriptions. If you or a family member is administering the medication or you need any additional supplies that the community services find difficult to supply this will also be given to you at the clinic. Please contact the OPAT nurse at the start of the week if you know that you need further (non-drug) supplies so these can be made ready for your clinic appointment. You are responsible for transporting these supplies from the hospital to your home.

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

Please do not hesitate to contact the OPAT team if you have any concerns. Contact details are listed at the end of this leaflet. Complications on OPAT are rare but it is important to look after your IV line as directed. Very occasionally patients can get problems directly related to the antibiotic they are taking. This can occur whether you are at home or in hospital. Some common things to look out for include the following:

- rash
- diarrhoea
- fever, feeling hot/cold, high temperature
- pain, redness and swelling around IV line
- blocked IV line.

If you feel unwell while at home with any of the symptoms above please contact us on the numbers below and let us know so that we can treat you. **In an emergency please call 999 for an ambulance or go to your nearest emergency (A&E) department.**

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about OPAT, please contact the OPAT nurse specialist or the IV team on **020 7188 8641** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). You can also contact the OPAT nurse by calling the hospital switchboard on **020 7188 7188** and asking for the bleep desk. Ask for bleep **0838** and wait for a response. This will connect you to the OPAT nurse directly.

Out of hours, please call the hospital switchboard on switchboard on **020 7188 7188** and ask to speak to the on-call microbiology registrar.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

t: 0800 731 0319 e: members@gstt.nhs.uk w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership