# Paediatric outpatient parenteral antibiotic therapy (p-OPAT) service

**This leaflet gives information about the p-OPAT service. If you have any questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for your child.**

## What is p-OPAT?

Antibiotics are used to fight infections caused by bacteria. When antibiotics are injected into a vein, it is called intravenous (IV) or parenteral therapy. It has been decided that IV antibiotics are the best course of treatment for your child. IV antibiotics are usually given to children 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 your child is receiving paediatric OPAT (p-OPAT) your local community children's nursing team will give the dose (amount) each day, or as the parent or carer, you can be taught to give the antibiotics at home.

## How to give the antibiotic

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

The cannula or IV line chosen for your child's treatment will depend on your child's veins and how long your child needs antibiotics for. You will be given information by the p-OPAT nurse about the cannula or IV line used, and how to look after it. Before your child leaves hospital, you will be given information about what to do if there are any issues with the cannula or IV line.

## Who decides if your child should receive p-OPAT?

Children might be considered for the p-OPAT service if they are ready to go home, but need more IV antibiotic treatment. If the medical or surgical team looking after you think that your child is suitable for the service, they will refer you to the p-OPAT team. A p-OPAT nurse and infectious diseases doctor will then meet with you to assess you and see if your child is eligible. The p-OPAT process will be fully explained to you and you can decide whether it is something that you would like to consider. If you decide to go onto the p-OPAT service, arrangements will be made to make sure you and your child can go home safely.

## Does your child have to go onto the p-OPAT service?

Your child will not be discharged onto the p-OPAT service if you do not want them to be. If you choose not to use the p-OPAT service, other treatment options for your child will be discussed with you.

## Benefits of the p-OPAT service

You and your child can be at home in a comfortable and familiar setting rather than staying in the hospital. P-OPAT is not always the right choice for everyone, but many parents and carers would recommend it, rather than staying in hospital. It can also allow you and your child to be back with your family, and for you to return to your usual routines.

## Risks of the p-OPAT service

Your child will receive at least 1 dose of their antibiotic in hospital to make sure that they do not have a severe reaction to it. Allergic reactions can occur with any medicine. You should get immediate medical attention if your child has any symptoms while at home, such as a rash, facial swelling, or difficulty in breathing.

Sometimes, the cannula or IV line can become blocked, or an infection can develop. If there are any problems, contact the p-OPAT team (contact details at the end of this leaflet) and your child will be assessed, and readmitted to hospital if necessary. Our working hours are Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. If there are any problems outside these hours, please go to your nearest emergency department (A&E).

## Who will give your child their IV antibiotics?

Some community teams provide nurses that can visit you in your home and administer your child's antibiotics. Some community teams arrange for you and your child to visit your local hospital for the antibiotics. However, this is not always possible and will depend on the course of treatment that your child needs.

Sometimes, parents or carers can choose to give their child the antibiotic themselves. If you would like to do this, you will be taught how, and assessed, in hospital. You will decide with the team which treatment type is best for you and your child. You will receive a supply of your child's IV antibiotics and other supplies needed when your child leaves hospital.

## How long your child's treatment will last

Your child might only need a few days of p-OPAT, or it could be a few weeks. It will depend on the type of the infection they have. This is often followed by a course of oral (by mouth) antibiotics. This will be explained by the doctor looking after your child. During your child's time on the p-OPAT service, you will be looked after by the p-OPAT team at Evelina London. The team will review your child's progress each week at the p-OPAT clinic.

## When you need to bring your child to the p-OPAT clinic

While on the p-OPAT programme, you and your child will need to come to the clinic each week to be reviewed by a p-OPAT specialist. The p-OPAT team will let you know which day to come to the clinic, and where you will be seen. Clinics are in either:

- Ocean outpatient department, on the ground floor, at Evelina London
- Snow Fox, 1st floor, St Thomas' Hospital

At the clinic appointment, your child's cannula or IV line will be reviewed, and the dressing changed. Blood samples to monitor the treatment will also be taken by the p-OPAT nurse. This is to make sure your child is responding to the treatment, and that the cannula or IV line is being well-maintained.

Your child will also receive a dose of antibiotic if coming to the clinic means that you will miss your community nurse's visit at home. You will also be given more antibiotics for your child at the weekly p-OPAT clinic. If there are any issues with you coming to the weekly appointments, you must contact the p-OPAT clinical nurse specialist (see below for contact details).

## What to do if your child is unwell or you are concerned

Please contact the p-OPAT team if you have any concerns. The contact numbers for the p-OPAT team are listed below. Complications on p-OPAT are rare but, it is important to look after your child's cannula or IV line as directed. Very occasionally, children can get problems directly related to the antibiotic they are taking. These can happen whether you are at home or in hospital. Some common things to look out for include:

- rash
- diarrhoea
- high temperature (fever), feeling hot or cold
- pain, redness and swelling around the cannula or IV line
- blocked cannula or IV line.

If your child feels unwell while at home with any of the above symptoms, contact us on the numbers below and let us know (our working hours are Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). We will advise you what to do next. **Outside these hours, please go to your nearest emergency department (A&E). In the event of an emergency, please call 999 for an ambulance or go to your nearest emergency department.**

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about p-OPAT, please contact the clinical nurse specialist (CNS) on **phone:** 07771 678 353, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Outside these hours, please go to your nearest emergency department (A&E). Please take with you your p-OPAT discharge letter that contains your child's details and current treatment.

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

**Evelina London Medicines Helpline**

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline, **phone** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm

**NHS 111**

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day, **phone:** 111
**web:** www.111.nhs.uk

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