IV Care: Total Parenteral Nutrition (TPN) Therapy

When you use total parenteral nutrition (TPN), fluids feed your body without passing through your stomach. TPN is given by IV (intravenous) with a pump.

Know your TPN fluids

- Read the medicine sheet that comes with the TPN. Be aware of any warnings and side effects.
- Check the label on the TPN bag before starting an IV. Make sure your name is on it. Check that the TPN fluids and dose are correct.
- Don't use TPN with an expired date.
- Don't use TPN if the bag is leaking.
- Don't use TPN if it looks lumpy or oily.
- Don't use TPN if anything is floating in it.

Handle supplies as directed

- Store TPN in the refrigerator. If it’s not kept cold, TPN lasts only 24 hours. Don't freeze.
- Before using TPN, let it get close to room temperature. Don't heat.
- If vitamins or minerals need to be added to the TPN, do so as directed.
- Put all used needles and syringes in a special container (sharps container).
- When the IV is done, put the used supplies in a plastic bag. Seal the bag and throw it in the trash.

Track your health

- Weigh yourself daily. If you lose or gain weight, your TPN dose may need adjusting.
- Keep track of your urine output as directed. Tell the nurse if the amount increases or decreases a lot.
- Check your blood sugar if directed. A nurse may take a blood sample from you each week. This is to make sure your TPN dose is right for you.

Know these IV basics

- Keep the dressing over the catheter exit site clean and dry. Change the dressing if it comes loose or gets soiled or wet.
- Flush the catheter with saline or heparin as directed.
- Wipe all injection sites with alcohol.
- Be sure all IV supplies are in sealed packets. If sterile packets are open, throw away those supplies.
- Do not stop the pump during an IV infusion unless a nurse tells you to do so.

Call 911

Call 911 if you have trouble breathing.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following:

- Redness near the catheter exit site or at any spot along the catheter line
- Fever or chills
- Swelling in the arm, neck, or chest
- Drainage at the exit site
- The catheter slips or comes out
- The TPN doesn’t flow well through the tubing
- The alarm on the pump comes on

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