

# Outpatient Parenteral Antibiotic Therapy (OPAT) Service

**Hospital @ Home Team & Ambulatory Care  
Medicine  
Scunthorpe General Hospital**

**This leaflet has been designed to  
give you important information and  
to answer some common queries  
you may have.**



# Information for patients and visitors

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## Introduction

This leaflet aims to provide you with information about the OPAT 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.

## 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.

There are 2 ways in which you may have your antibiotic administered and will depend on your condition. It will either:

- be administered using a syringe over 3-4 minutes
- have a small infusion device connected to your line which you will need to have connected throughout the course of your treatment

The OPAT team will discuss this with you before you go home.



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### 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.

You may also be considered for OPAT from a clinic to prevent you from having to be admitted to hospital.

An OPAT nurse 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 the contact details further on in this leaflet) 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. The hospital provides a dedicated team of 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.

Another option is to come to hospital on a daily basis to be given the antibiotic in a hospital clinic (Ambulatory Care Unit). These options will be discussed with you and you will decide with the team which treatment type is best for you.



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## 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 doctor in charge of your care will discuss this with you. During your time on the OPAT service you will be under the supervision of our OPAT team, who will review your progress each week (you will not normally need to be present for these meetings).

These weekly meetings called a multi-disciplinary meeting (MDT) consist of:

- OPAT Consultant
- OPAT Nurse
- Antimicrobial Consultant Pharmacist
- Speciality Consultant
- Consultant Microbiologist

At these meetings, your blood tests will be checked and your progress reviewed.

## When do I need to come to the OPAT clinic?

If you are not attending the clinic every day, you will need to attend the Ambulatory Care Unit at least once a week.

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 along with a review by the doctor.

If you require hospital transport for these appointments please let the nurse looking after you know so that transport arrangements can be made.

## 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. 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



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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 Details for Further Information

The OPAT Team work from Mon-Sun, 8-6pm (an answer phone will be there to take your call and will be checked on a regular basis).

**Tel: 01724 203427.**

**In the event of an emergency call 999.**

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service offers confidential advice, support and information on any health related matters.

If you have a comment, concern, complaint or compliment about the care or service you have received from the Trust you can contact the PALS team as follows:

Telephone: 03033 306518

Email: [nlq-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:nlq-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

There are also offices at both the Diana Princess of Wales Hospital (near the main entrance) and Scunthorpe General Hospital (on the C Floor, near the outpatient department), should you wish to visit.

**Please note: PALS should not be contacted for clinical advice relating to the content of this leaflet. The service should be contacted directly in the first instance.**

### Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust

**Diana Princess of Wales Hospital  
Scartho Road  
Grimsby  
DN33 2BA**

**Scunthorpe General Hospital  
Cliff Gardens  
Scunthorpe  
DN15 7BH**

**Goole & District Hospital  
Woodland Avenue  
Goole  
DN14 6RX**

**03033 306999**



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[www.nlg.nhs.uk](http://www.nlg.nhs.uk)

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