

Outpatient Parenteral Antibiotic Therapy (OPAT) service



This leaflet aims to provide you with information about the OPAT service. If you have any further questions, please speak to the doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is OPAT?

Antibiotics are medicines active against bacteria that can cause a significant infection. They can be given orally (by mouth) or injected into a vein (intravenous (IV) or parenteral therapy). IV/parenteral 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 then you (or a family member or friend) will either be taught to give the antibiotics, or arrangements will be made for a nurse to visit your home daily to give the doses to you.

How is the antibiotic given?

The antibiotic is given into your vein through a small narrow flexible tube called a PICC line. The catheter is inserted into a vein in the upper arm above the elbow and treaded until its tip is in the big vein just above the heart.

Who decides if I should receive 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 will then meet with you to assess you and see if you are eligible. The 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 OPAT service then arrangements will be made to make sure you are able to go home safely. You may also be referred from an outpatient clinic and avoid admission to hospital.

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 OPAT service, alternative options for your treatment plan will be discussed with you.

What are the benefits of the OPAT service?

You will be able to go 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 can also allow you to maintain your independence, be back with your family and friends or even return to work.

What are the risks?

You will receive at least one dose of your antibiotic in hospital to ensure that 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 catheter can become blocked or an infection can develop. If there are any problems then contact the OPAT (see end of leaflet for details) and you will be rapidly assessed and if necessary readmitted back into hospital.

Who will give me the IV antibiotics?

The OPAT service will be tailored to your needs. Many community teams provide nurses that can visit you in your home and administer your antibiotic and some patients may be able to attend their community hospital as an outpatient. However this may not always be possible depending on the course of treatment that is determined to be best for you.

When this happens some patients will chose 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 or the community nurses.

How long will my treatment last?

You may require only a few more days of IV treatment or several weeks depending on the nature of the infection. Often this may be followed by a further course of oral antibiotics. This will be explained by the doctor looking after you.

During your time on the OPAT service you will be under the supervision of the OPAT team and your referring Consultant at the Royal United Hospital, who will be reviewing your progress on a weekly basis.

When do I need to come to the OPAT clinic?

Whilst on the OPAT programme you will be required to attend the fortnightly clinic for review by the OPAT specialist nurse. The OPAT clinic is held in the ground floor x-ray department (B7) at the RUH. An appointment will be made for you in advance.

At the clinic appointment, your catheter and your blood results will be reviewed, this is to ensure that you are responding to treatment. You may also receive a dose of antibiotic if your clinic attendance means that you will miss your community practitioner's visit at

home. You will also obtain further supplies of your antibiotic when you attend the weekly OPAT clinic. This consultation provides an opportunity for you to discuss any concerns. The OPAT nurses may also review you in the outpatient clinic together with your relevant medical consultant.

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

The contact numbers for the OPAT team are listed at the end of this leaflet. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any concerns. Complications on OPAT are rare but it is important to look after your IV catheter as directed. Very occasionally patients can get problems directly related to the antibiotics 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 the IV line or cannula
- Swelling of lips and face/ difficulty in breathing.
- Blocked IV line/ cannula.

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

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about OPAT please contact:

The OPAT nurses: 01225 821490. If there is nobody in the office please leave a message and we will contact you back as soon as we are able. We work Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm.

During working hours you can contact us on our mobile phones but please do not leave messages on these.

Jayne Bevan: 07748932544

Teresa Bolton: 07748938870

The OPAT clinic is based in Main Xray B7, please go to reception and ask for the OPAT nurses.