



Planning to Start a New Medication

Create a list of questions and concerns to discuss with your healthcare provider.

- **It is important that you understand and are comfortable with the dosing schedule, possible side effects, and any other changes to your treatment plan.**

If your provider orders testing for you to complete before you can start treatment, be sure to get it done as soon as you can.

- **As a safety measure, many infusions require testing like lab work or a TB skin test to be completed before you can start treatment. Sometimes this needs to be done before the insurance company will approve coverage, so getting it done as soon as possible helps prevent additional delays.**

Ask your provider if there are any vaccines you should get before starting treatment, or if there are any vaccines you should not get once you start your new medication.

- **Sometimes “live” vaccines should be avoided, but there may be other vaccines that are recommended to keep you healthy during treatment.**

Check the manufacturer’s website to learn about patient access programs and financial assistance that may be available to help you afford your medications.

- **Your prescriber’s office or infusion center can also help you find this information.**
- **If you have any concerns about your ability to afford the new medication, tell your healthcare team—they want to know so they can help!!**

Preparing for Infusion Day

Ask if you can bring a friend, or if you should plan to have someone drive you home.

- **Find out the visitation policy before planning to have a friend or family member stay with you during your treatment.**
- **Most of the time you can drive yourself to and from your infusions, but your provider may order additional medications to be given before your infusion which may make you too sleepy to drive yourself home.**

Start drinking plenty of extra fluids like water for a day or two prior to your appointment.

- **Staying hydrated can help make your veins more easily accessible.**
- **If you have been told to limit your fluid intake due to another medical condition, check with your provider before drinking extra fluids.**

Try to get a good night's sleep.

- **Being well-rested can help decrease anxiety and give you the energy for what may be a long treatment day.**

If you become ill or have any new changes to your health, call your infusion center before your appointment to discuss the possible need to reschedule.

- **Many infusions should not be given if your body is already working hard to heal itself from an infection or other illness. If you develop a fever or infection, are currently taking or recently finished a course of antibiotics, have a planned or recent surgical procedure, or are otherwise not feeling well, it may be best to postpone your treatment.**

On Infusion Day

Bring a list of your current home medications and drug allergies.

- **List all prescription medications as well as over-the-counter vitamins and supplements. Include your dose and when you take them (once a day, twice a day, etc.)**

Wear comfortable clothing and be sure your shirt sleeves can be rolled up to allow access to your arms (and veins!).

- **Some people feel chilly during their infusion because the medication going into your body is room temperature, which is much cooler than your body temperature. Dressing in loose layers and warm socks can help.**

Let your nurse know right away if you have questions or feel different during your infusion.

- **Sometimes infusions can cause mild side effects that can be resolved just by slowing down the infusion rate or giving some extra medications.**
- **We mentioned that you might feel a little bit cold, but keep in mind that shaking chills and chattering teeth during your infusion are not normal —if this happens, let your nurse know right away.**

Plan to bring something to keep your mind busy.

- **Reading a book, doing a crossword puzzle, playing games, or completing [IAF's patient survey](#) on your tablet or phone will help pass the time much faster than watching the clock. Many infusion centers have wi-fi available for patient use as well.**

Bring something to eat and drink if you would like.

- **Some infusions last several hours so you may get hungry. Many infusion centers do offer refreshments like drinks and snacks, so you can ask about this ahead of time-- or just pack a snack to be prepared!**

After Your Infusion

You may be asked to stay at the infusion center for monitoring after your infusion is finished.

- **Some medications require patients to be observed for a short time (30-60 minutes) after the infusion to be sure you tolerate it well.**

Hold pressure on the site after the IV is removed to help minimize bruising.

- **Bruising and slight discomfort at the IV site is common and should resolve in a few days.**
- **A cold compress can be used for comfort for the first 24-48 hours to reduce discomfort and swelling. After that, warmth (like a heating pad) can help promote healing at the site. Ask your nurse for the best way to use cold and warm compresses safely.**

You may want to relax at home for the rest of the day, but maybe not! Each medication affects each person differently.

- **Some people require more rest after an infusion, and others report having more energy. After your first few treatments, you'll learn what works best for you and can arrange your schedule accordingly.**

Schedule your next appointment before you leave.

- **Try to book your next appointment so you can schedule other events accordingly. This can help keep you on track to receive your infusions on time and avoid disruptions to your treatment plan.**

Stick with it!

- **Most infusions require a few treatments before you will start to see an improvement in your symptoms, so don't give up!**
- **If you have questions about your treatment or condition, be sure to discuss them with your healthcare team—we're here for you!**