

Caring for your Baby's Cannula

What is a cannula?

A cannula is a plastic tube inserted into your baby's limb (hand/foot/arm/leg). The cannula allows us to give medication (in this case it will be antibiotics but can also be used for other medications/fluids).

If your baby is discharged from the Neonatal Unit to a postnatal ward but still requires antibiotics, the cannula will stay in until the antibiotic course has finished.

If the cannula accidentally falls out it is important to inform a Nurse or Midwife immediately as there may be some bleeding and the cannula will need to be replaced.

How can you help care for your baby's cannula?

- Leave the limb with the cannula in out of your baby's vest or baby-grow (the Nurse/Midwife caring for your baby can show you how to do this).
- Take extra care when holding your baby so that you do not press on or pull at the cannula.
If you are letting someone else hold your baby make sure that they also take extra care when holding them so that they do not press on or pull at the cannula
- If you think the dressing looks loose, please let a Nurse/Midwife know so it can be fixed/replaced
- If the cannula accidentally comes out it is important to identify this 30-60 minutes earlier than the planned antibiotic dose as your baby will need a new cannula.
- A mitten or a sock can be put over the cannula to keep it secure.

Questions you may have:

Can I bath my baby?

It is important that the cannula stays dry so we advise you not to bath your baby. However staff can support you if a bath is required.

Does the cannula hurt my baby?

After the cannula has been inserted and is not in use it should not cause any pain. Sometimes babies may become agitated when medication is given through the cannula as it can feel cold, however this should quickly settle.

Can I hold my baby as normal?

Yes absolutely. We advise you to be careful of the cannula to prevent it falling out.

This leaflet can be made available in different formats on request. If you would like to make any suggestions or comments about the content of this leaflet, then please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0151 702 4353 or by email at pals@lwh.nhs.uk

Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust
Crown Street
Liverpool
L8 7SS

Tel: 0151 708 9988

Issue Date: 01/10/2026

Reference: Neo_2023-14-v3

Review Date: 03/04/2026

© Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust