Out-patient parenteral antimicrobial therapy (OPAT) service

Information for patients
What is the out-patient parenteral antimicrobial therapy service (OPAT)?

The OPAT service allows patients who are otherwise medically stable but need short to long term intravenous (IV) antibiotic treatment, to be safely treated at home or in an out-patient setting.

The service provides these patients with the same quality care that they would otherwise receive as an in-patient.

Patients and carers can be taught to self-administer IV antibiotics via a ‘vascular access device’ (also known as an IV line) or can be referred to community nurses for daily administration of their medication.

How does the service work?

Your doctor will discuss your treatment plan with a microbiologist/infectious diseases consultant. Together, they will decide if you are suitable to be referred to the OPAT service.

If you are, you will be seen by an OPAT specialist nurse while you are still in the hospital. They will discuss which type of IV line you will need and how long you will need it for.

You and/or your carer will have minimum of two teaching sessions where you will be shown how to
administer the antibiotics yourself. If you are unable to self-administer, we will refer you to district nurses in the community.

You will be advised to attend the day unit for administration of your antibiotics if this is the best option for you. Please see day unit details below.

You will be provided with a set of notes or a booklet about your treatment and care of your IV line. You should keep the booklet until the end of your treatment.

You will be booked to be seen weekly by the OPAT specialist nurse in the day unit. The nurse will review you to take routine blood tests, check your IV line, and supply you with antibiotics and other required supplies.

You will also be seen every fortnight by the microbiology/infectious diseases consultant and an OPAT nurse to discuss the progress of your treatment and answer any questions you have.

At the end of your treatment your line will be safely removed, and aftercare information and extra dressings will be provided to you. We’ll also ask you to complete a survey to help us improve the OPAT service.

In all cases, a doctor and specialist nurse will explain
your treatment to you and answer any questions you may have about it or the OPAT service.

**Risks and side-effects**
In very rare case, some people may have an extreme allergic reaction to their medication. This is called **anaphylaxis**. Symptoms may include:
- swelling of throat and mouth
- difficulty in swallowing or speaking

If you experience this, dial 999 immediately for emergency assistance.

**What to do if you feel unwell**
Please contact a member of the OPAT service, the district nurse (if you have been assigned one), your GP or the hospital immediately if you have any of these symptoms:
- raised temperature (fever) or shaking
- dizziness, facial flushing or rash
- sore throat, aching, headache, nausea or diarrhoea
Contact details
The OPAT service is available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm at Barnet Hospital and the Royal Free Hospital.

Barnet Hospital:
Acute medical unit (AMU), level 1

Phone (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm): 020 7794 0500 followed by:
- Bleep 2773 or 2774
- Extension: 65830

Out of hours or Bank holidays: Contact switchboard on 020 7794 0500 and ask to speak to the ‘on-call microbiology consultant’.

Royal Free Hospital:
Planned investigation treatment unit (PITU), 2nd floor

Phone: 020 7794 0500 followed by:
- Bleep: 1960 or 2654
- Extension: 22561

Out of hours or Bank holidays: Contact switchboard on 020 7794 0500 and ask to speak to the ‘on-call infectious diseases registrar’.
More information
For more information about the OPAT service at the Royal Free London, please visit our website:
www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/out-patient-parenteral-antimicrobial-therapy-opat-service

Your feedback
If you have any feedback on this leaflet or for a list of references for it, please email:
rf.communications@nhs.net

Alternative formats
This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please speak to a member of staff.

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