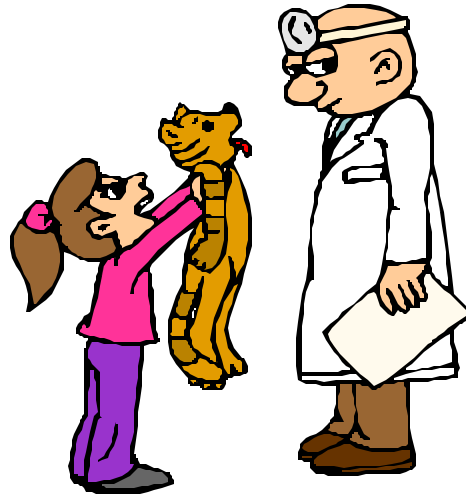


Intrathecal Medications for Children



What are intrathecal medications?

"Intrathecal medications" is sometimes hard to say, so we just call them "IT Meds" for short. These medicines are not taken by mouth or given through an IV. These medicines are given to you through a small metal tube that the doctor will put into your spine. Your spine is made up of small bones called "vertebrae," and they are the bones that start at your neck, go down the middle of your back and stop at your bottom. The vertebrae (let's call them your backbones) have a sac-like covering around and in between them that holds fluid. This fluid looks like water. When IT Meds are given, some of this fluid is taken out of the "sac" and mixed with the medicine that you need. After the fluid and medicine are mixed together, it is put back into the "sac" around your backbones.

How long will the procedure last?

The length of the procedure will be different each time because each child having the procedure done will act differently. It could last as long as thirty minutes (the length of one cartoon show), or it could last as long as one hour (the length of two cartoon shows).

What happens during this procedure?

- You will go to a room called the treatment room where you will sit on a table. Mom and Dad, or another family member, can be in this room with you the whole time. There will be doctors and nurses in this room with you, also.
- A blood pressure cuff will be placed on your arm or your leg. This cuff will give your arm or leg a hug every few minutes. It will be hooked up to a small monitor that tells the doctor how you are doing during the procedure.
- A pulse oximeter will be put on your finger or toe. This looks and feels like a Band-Aid, but it has a light on the end that glows red. It will also be hooked up to the small monitor that will tell the doctor how you are doing during the procedure.
- You will be given medicine through your IV that will help you relax. It might make you feel a little silly or even sleepy. If you want to take a nap, go ahead. That is ok. The doctor will talk with your parents and decide how much and what kind of sleepy medicine you need.

- You will be asked to lie on your side with your knees close to your chest OR to sit up and lean forward towards your knees making your back curve. One of the nurses will help you stay in this position. It will be like the nurse is giving you a hug while the doctor is giving you your medicine. It is very important that you stay still during this time.
- If EMLA cream was used to help numb a small area of skin on your back, it will be wiped off now.
- The doctor will clean this same small area with Betadine. This will feel cold and wet. Betadine is a brown soap, so wearing one of our hospital gowns is a good idea, so that your own clothes do not get dirty.
- The doctor will cover your back with a special piece of paper that has a hole in it. This paper keeps the germs off your back, and the hole shows the doctor where he just cleaned.
- The doctor will feel around on your back with his thumb to find the best place to give you your medicine. Remember to be very still and stay curled up.
- Next, the doctor will put some medicine in your back with a needle. This medicine is called Lidocaine, and it helps you feel less pain during the rest of the procedure. This will sting, but it will only last for a few seconds. Some children have said that it feels like a bee-sting.
- A small needle covered with a metal tube will be put into that "sac" around your backbones. Some children have said that they feel pressure when the doctor does this.
- The needle will be taken out and the small metal tube will stay in. The fluid that the doctor needs will come out through the tube like water drips from a faucet. This fluid drips into small clear containers. Some of it will be taken to the lab for tests.
- The rest of the fluid is mixed with the medicine that you need. When the fluid and medicine are mixed together, it is put into a syringe. The syringe is attached to the metal tube. The doctor then pushes the medicine into the "sac" around your backbones. When all of the medicine has been pushed in, the small metal tube will be taken out and the doctor will hold a piece of gauze over that spot.
- Your back will be cleaned using gauze and alcohol and then a Band-Aid will be put over the spot where the tube was.



Caregiver Tips:



- Two caregivers usually can be with their child during the procedure.
- It is important that your child remain on his or her back for half an hour after the procedure to prevent a headache.
- Some ways to help your child cope during the procedure:
 - Blow bubbles;
 - Bring in a book that your child enjoys, and read it to them during the procedure;
 - Play a sing-a-long video or music, and encourage your child to sing, hum or just listen;
 - Play soothing music to help them relax;
 - Allow your child to bring in a security item to hold or squeeze during this procedure. This could be a stuffed animal or a blanket or something similar;
 - Bring in Play-doh or a stress ball and encourage your child to squeeze it, as needed. You can ask your Child Life Specialist for other ideas.