

Parenteral Nutrition (PN) - Glossary of Terms

Additives: medicine, vitamins, or electrolytes that are added to the PN.

Air embolism: air pocket that is in the blood stream.

Amino Acids: part of proteins that make up the “building blocks” for the body.

Aseptic: free from bacteria, sterile, and not contaminated.

Calcium: helps to build strong bones and is needed for nerves and muscles to function right.

Catheter clamp: used to prevent air, liquid, or blood flowing through the IV catheter when not needed.

Catheter infection: bacteria or germs that have entered the bloodstream through the IV catheter.

Central intravenous (IV) line or central line: a flexible tube (catheter) placed in a large vein in the chest or neck. The catheter is often placed in the arm and threaded to a large vein by the heart.

Contaminated: not sterile.

Continuous: a 24-hour delivery of medicine by an infusion pump. Gives a specific dose every hour.

Cyclic PN: a method of delivery of PN given only during part of the day usually at night. It allows freedom from being connected to the PN during the day.

Dextrose: is a carbohydrate (sugar) that is in PN and provides fuel and energy for the body.

Electrolytes: important in the body for conducting electricity. Examples of electrolytes include sodium, potassium, chloride, calcium, and phosphate. Imbalance can occur due to illness, vomiting, diarrhea or other medical conditions. Lab tests are monitored closely when a person is on PN.

Flush: a process that helps to keep the IV catheter open. Flush with saline and heparin if instructed.

H2 (histamine blocker): a type of medicine that helps to block histamine which makes stomach acid. Common names include famotidine (Pepcid®) or ranitidine (Zantac®).

Heparin: a blood thinning medicine used to prevent blood from clotting in the IV catheter.

Injection cap: a needleless plastic cap (“blue cap”) attached at the end of the catheter tubing. This needs to be changed weekly with each dressing change. The blue cap also is changed after blood draws or whenever it is removed from the catheter. It is very important to “scrub the hub” before attaching saline, medication, PN, or heparin. No needles should ever be used with this blue cap.

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Insulin: an additive in PN to help control blood glucose.

Intermittent: a method of delivery of medicine or PN given several times a day for a short period of time.

Intravenous (IV): medicine, fluid, or PN delivered in a vein through a catheter.

Lipids: another name for fats. These are needed for healthy cells and provide calories for the body.

Macronutrients: large nutrients in PN which includes carbohydrates, proteins, and fat.

Magnesium: an electrolyte that is important for nerve and muscle function.

Micronutrients: small nutrients that the body requires in small amounts. These are added to the PN and include electrolytes, vitamins, and minerals. Micronutrient levels are checked by lab draws.

Occluded: the catheter line is clogged or blocked.

Occlusive: a complete seal.

Parenteral Nutrition (PN): an IV solution of sterile nutrients the body needs for nutrition.

Phosphorus: an electrolyte needed for the structure and function of cells in the body.

Potassium: an electrolyte needed for proper nerve function.

Pump: a piece of equipment used to deliver medicine, fluids, or PN.

Sepsis: an infection caused by bacteria or germs in the blood.

Sodium: an electrolyte that helps to keep fluid balance in the body. It also helps with nerve and muscle function.

Sterile: free from bacteria and not contaminated.

Trace Elements: the body requires these in small amounts for good health and growth. Trace elements in PN include zinc, copper, manganese, chromium, and selenium.

Vitamins: small amounts are needed for proper metabolism, growth, and development. Vitamins are added to the PN and can include vitamins A, B, C, D, E, and K.

Water: an essential nutrient. The body requires a certain amount to prevent dehydration (too little water) or swelling (too much water).