



SUBCUTANEOUS FLUIDS

Are there any alternatives? - I really don't want to do this! This is a normal reaction for most people. Giving injections is outside the comfort zone for almost everyone except medical professionals. However, fluid administration is not nearly as difficult as it sounds. The benefits provided to your pet will make it well worth your time to learn this simple technique. However, some of our clients really prefer that we give this periodic treatment. The savings to you, if you do it, is in the expense and inconvenience of having to bring your pet to us.

How is the equipment assembled? - The equipment consists of a bag of IV fluids, an IV tubing set, and a needle. The following steps should be followed:

1. Remove the outer, protective wrapper from the inner IV fluid bag.
2. Remove the IV tubing from its package.
3. The top end of the IV tubing has a large, pointed end with a protective cap. Remove this cap, but do not permit the pointed end to touch anything.
4. Pull the protective covering from the exit port on the bottom end of the IV bag. This will expose a hole which will accept the pointed end of the IV tubing.
5. Close the adjustable lock in the middle of the IV tubing by moving the roller so as to compress the tubing closed.
6. Push the pointed end of the IV tubing into the open hole of the IV bag—seat it firmly to prevent leaks.
7. Remove the protective cap (do not discard it) from the other end of the IV tubing set. Do not permit the end of the tubing to touch anything.
8. Lift the IV fluid bag vertical and then squeeze and release the bulb at the top of the IV tubing. Repeat until the bulb fills about half full with the IV fluid.
9. Open the roller lock on the tubing to allow the fluid to flow freely and fill the IV tubing. Then close the lock again.
10. Repeat step nine if any bubbles remain in the tubing.
11. Close the roller lock and cover the end of the tubing with its protective cap.
12. Break the protective cover on the needle so the open end (not the sharp end) is exposed. Do not allow it to touch anything.

13. Remove the protective cap on the IV tubing and place the open end of the needle onto it, leaving the protective cover over the sharp end of the needle. Seat the needle firmly.

Where is the needle inserted? - You will insert the needle just under the skin in locations that have unusually loose skin. The most comfortable and safest for most pets are just over the shoulder blades. This area is located at the top of the front legs on either side about 1/2 inch from the midline.

How is the needle inserted?

1. Choose a location in which to treat your pet. Often placing the pet in an area where it is not normally allowed will help to quiet it, like a table top or countertop. However, some pets do best in the owner's lap.
2. Hang the IV bag with its tubing about 3 feet above the level of the pet's head.
3. Place your pet in the treatment location. Be sure both you and your pet are in positions that will be comfortable for about 10-15 minutes. The end of the IV tubing should easily reach the pet. Talk softly and stroke the pet to calm it.
4. Lift a roll of loose skin over either the right or left shoulder blade with the pet in an upright, standing position. Disinfect a small area near the base of the skin fold with alcohol on cotton (rubbing alcohol or ethyl alcohol will work). If the alcohol bothers your pet, you may wish to avoid the disinfection. Infections from IV fluid administration are rare.
5. Expose the needle on the end of the tubing and lay the point of the needle at the base of the roll in the disinfected area of skin with the needle horizontal and pointing toward the pet's head.
6. Advance the needle slightly forward while pulling the roll of the skin backward. This should place the point of the needle under the skin but above the shoulder muscles.
7. Release the roll of skin. The point of the needle should remain under the skin.
8. Holding the pet with one hand, roll the IV lock valve to open it and begin the flow of IV fluids.



SUBCUTANEOUS FLUIDS (Cont.)

What should I expect as the fluids are running?

Most pets tolerate this procedure quite well. However, if the fluids are unusually cold or warm, they may cause some discomfort. Ideally for cats, the fluids should be stored at body temperature (100-102°F) or warmed by placing the bag under running hot water. If you warm them test the temperature of the fluids on your forearm as you would for a baby's formula. Generally room temperature is acceptable for all but the tiniest dogs. Do not refrigerate the fluids.

As the fluids are running, a lump will form under the skin. Do not be alarmed; this is the fluids being delivered. The fluids may run as fast as the needle size allows.

What if air bubbles are carried under the skin?

There is no problem if a few air bubbles are injected under the skin. If quite a bit of air is injected, you may feel a "crackling" sound when you push on the area. The pet could feel some mild discomfort for a few hours, but no real harm will occur. The air will eventually be absorbed.

What if the fluids quit running? - This often happens if the end of the needle moves against the skin or underlying muscles. Do not remove the needle; rather, gently reposition it until the fluids begin to flow again. Experiment with the needle's position until the fluids flow freely.

How much do I give? - We will determine in advance the amount to give based on your pet's size and medical condition. As a rule a cat may receive 100-200ml at one time (half over each shoulder). A good way to measure the amount of fluids given, is to use the scale on the side of the bag. Mark the next point at which to stop with a marker pen. Then when you reach that mark, stop the fluids.

What do I do when I have given the prescribed amount? - 1. Stop the flow of fluids by rolling the IV tubing lock firmly downward to close it.
2. Remove the needle and replace it with a new, sterile needle (leaving it covered).
3. Store the equipment in a safe place until the next treatment.

Is there anything different about giving fluid on subsequent treatments?

The administration is the same. The fluids are less likely to be contaminated by bacteria from the skin if you discard the used needle at the end of each administration. Before discarding the old needle, replace it inside its protective cap so someone won't get accidentally pricked. If you wish, you may return old needles to our hospital for proper disposal.

I tried to give fluids, but the flow was very slow.

What should I do?

If the tubing lock is closed tightly for a long time, the tubing will develop a "memory" of that position and will not open completely. The lock can be opened completely and moved up or down the tubing and reclosed. The old spot can be pinched open with your fingers.

How long until the lump of fluid goes away?

It will take about 2-4 hours for all of the fluid to be absorbed. In some cases, it may take up to 6 hours. If absorption is slow, gravity may cause the fluids to migrate downward. It can move under the skin of the legs, but will eventually be absorbed.

I have used this bag of fluids for several treatments, and now the fluid is cloudy. What does this mean? - If any cloudiness or discoloration occurs, do not use that bag. It usually means that bacteria have contaminated the fluids. If you administer these fluids, a serious infection may occur under the skin.

Are there any things I should watch out for?

The only complication that may occur is an infection in the site of the fluid treatment. If this should happen your pet will have a fever (over 103°F), continue to have a tender, swollen area where the fluids were given after 12 or more hours, probably be lethargic, and lose its appetite.

If you have questions about your pet's condition, please call us.

The computed dose for your pet is _____ ml given every _____ day(s) / week(s).

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to serve you!