



Parenteral Nutrition

Whānau/Family Information – Neonatal Services

Parenteral nutrition (PN) is used to feed extremely premature or very sick pēpi/babies who are unable to meet their nutritional requirements through milk feeds.

What is parenteral nutrition?

PN is nutrition in a liquid form that is given directly into your pēpi bloodstream intravenously (through a vein). The solution has nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, proteins and fats. It is called total parenteral nutrition (TPN) where it is used as the only source of nutrition.

The aim of PN is to help your pēpi to grow. An infusion pump is used to deliver the nutrition to your pēpi. This allows a continuous flow of nutrients to flow into the bloodstream and become absorbed.

In newborn pēpi it is common for the vein in the pēpi umbilical cord to be used initially for this. If PN is needed for longer than a week then a tube (longline) will be put into one of your pēpi bigger veins in their legs or arms. Very occasionally a head vein might be used. Once the longline has been placed, the tube in the umbilical cord will be removed. PN can be given for as long as it is needed through a longline.

Why does my pēpi need to be fed PN?

Although very premature pēpi and sick pēpi can have milk feeds, these often need to be introduced gradually so their gut can learn to cope with them. Very premature pēpi are usually fed PN at first, as they have an immature digestive system that needs time to develop so they can tolerate milk to meet their nutritional requirements.

As your pēpi begins to grow and become stronger, tube feeding will be started. Tube feeding is where breastmilk or formula is given through a tube passed into your pēpi nose or mouth to their stomach. With increasing amounts of milk feed being tolerated, the amount of PN given will decrease. Once your pēpi is tolerating full milk feeds, PN will stop and the longline removed.

We understand that seeing your pēpi being fed intravenously can be quite scary, but it does allow your pēpi to be fed and get the nutrients required in order to grow.

When your pēpi can start to have breast or bottle feeds you will receive plenty of support. Please do not hesitate to talk to your nurse or doctor if you have any concerns.

