

# Fluid Therapy

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The second method used to administer fluids is subcutaneously (SQ) in the scruff of the skin at the shoulder blades. The administered fluid slowly absorbs over several hours. This method is used for pets that are not seriously ill, but just need some additional fluids to maintain hydration. In general, it is used for cats and smaller dogs. It is of special benefit for pets that need long term fluid administration at home, usually older (geriatric) cats or those with [kidney disease](#). These fluids are so beneficial that we commonly teach clients how to administer them at home to pets that have chronic illness.

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## Home Administration

If your doctor feels your pet needs SQ fluids at home you will be taught how to administer them by our [nursing staff](#). At first it might seem an impossible notion to give your pet fluids at home. Not only is there the psychological component of using a needle or worry about hurting your pet, there is also a worry that your pet will not stay cooperative long enough for the 5 minutes it takes to give the fluids. Rest assured that you will not be forced into giving these fluids if you feel uncomfortable, although we have yet to encounter a client that was not able to perform this procedure at home. This is because we have extensive experience in this area and we teach you at your own individual pace. Only when you feel you are ready will you proceed on your own.

You will be given as many personal demonstrations as necessary, and can return to the hospital at any time for further demonstrations or to make sure you are performing the procedure properly. You are welcome to bring your pet in at any time for assistance in giving the fluids, so do not feel you are on your own. We consider you part of our nursing team and are willing to give any assistance needed. Before you are given a demonstration the following basics will help prepare you.

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Keep children and other pets away if they are disruptive during the process. Have all of your equipment readily available, usually on the same table as your pet. Depending on the size of your pet, the table should be around waist to chest high. It is helpful to set up one area of your house to give the fluids. Hang

the fluid bottle in this room for easy access. It should be at least a few feet above the table for optimum flow. You will be shown how to set this up by one of our staff.

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This fluid bag is ready for administration to a pet. It is yellow because B-complex vitamins have been added. Your doctor will let you know if added vitamins are needed for your pet. The IV line is already attached to the fluid bag and the proper fluid level is in the receptacle. The tip of the IV lines is also being stored properly in the IV set. Keep the fluids stored at room temperature (and in a dark environment if B-complex vitamins have been added) in between use. Do not use fluids that are cloudy because this could be a sign of contamination.



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This is a close-up view of the proper fluid level in the receptacle and the proper storage of the tip of the IV line. The fluid level in the receptacle should be at the halfway point (see arrow). There is a line to mark the spot. It is not critical to remove all air bubbles since they will cause no harm when administered this way.



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You will use a new needle every time you administer the fluids. You will be shown how to place the needle on the IV line in a sterile manner. Most times we use a 22 gauge or a 20 gauge needle for cats and small dogs. The 22 gauge is slightly smaller in diameter, so there is less discomfort on your pets part, yet it takes a little longer to administer the fluids. Each pet and owner is different, so unless your doctor gives you specific instructions, try both the 20 gauge (blue) and the 22 gauge (pink) and learn which works best in your hands.



After you have given the fluids remove the needle and place the IV line back into its receptacle on the fluid bag. Do not throw the needles in the garbage when finished. Store them in an area that children and pets do not have access to. Return them to us when you pick up a new supply of fluids and we will dispose of your needles for you.

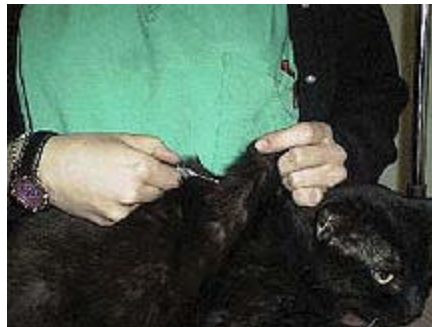
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Now that your equipment is ready bring your pet to the table. Always start out slowly and reassure your pet by talking and petting. Gently control its head with your front hand and hug it to you with your other hand. Remove the cover from the needle and hold it in the hand that is hugging the pet to you. Start petting the back of your pets head with the hand the was holding the head.

Eventually you will pull gently on the scruff of the neck to make a small tent with the skin.



Gently insert the needle all of the way into the scruff of the neck where you have made the tent. Most pets do not feel this at all because every new needle is very sharp and therefore causes minimal discomfort on insertion. It is not necessary to wipe the skin with alcohol when you utilize a new needle every time. Alcohol does not sterilize the skin, and the smell and cold feeling may feel uncomfortable to your pet.



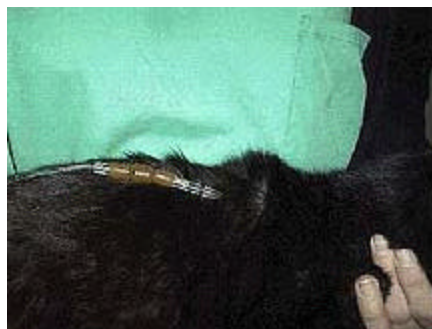
A close-up view is helpful to visualize insertion of the needle. The hand with the needle rests on top of the pet until insertion. This is helpful if your pet moves during the process, because you will be moving with your pet.



Insertion of the needle is the most difficult part of the process for most people. We will help you overcome any fears you have by allowing you to observe our technique until you are ready to try it on your own with our help. Only when you are completely comfortable with the process will you need to do it on your own.

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After the needle has been inserted turn on the fluids. Most cats and small dogs will receive anywhere from 50 to 200 ml (it takes 30 ml to make up 1 ounce), given once or twice daily. It usually takes 5 minutes or less to give 100 ml, and most pets stay still for this period of time. You can let go of the needle in most pets and spend the rest of the fluid administration time petting and talking. The skin will slowly fill up and make a swollen appearance. They will be slowly absorbed over several hours and the slight swelling will resolve. If the fluid stops flowing before you have given the recommended amount gently reposition the needle slightly by rotating it or moving it slightly forward or backward. If the fluids seem to flow slower than usual it is possible the IV tubing has been kinked or crushed by the stopper, and needs gently squeezing to return it to its normal cylindrical shape.



When you are finished remove the needle from the IV line and store the tip of the line back into the receptacle. Please find a safe location to store used needles until you bring them to us for proper disposal. Now that you have been exposed to the basics of fluid administration you are ready for an actual demonstration.

Source: <http://www.lbah.com/IV.htm>