

## Infusion Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is infusion therapy, or IV infusion?**

IV stands for intravenous, which means “within the vein.” Infusion therapy is a medication that is given by placing a flexible catheter in your vein using a small gauge needle.

### **What conditions are treated with infusion therapy?**

There are many diseases treated with infusion therapy, including but not limited to: rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, Crohn’s Disease, ulcerative colitis, Wegener’s granulomatosis, microscopic polyanglitis, osteoporosis, systemic lupus erythematosus and more.

### **How long will it take to be scheduled?**

It may take 3 weeks to 1 month to be scheduled for your first infusion. Most insurance companies require a predetermination or authorization before you can receive infusion, and unfortunately, it can take a couple of days to weeks before we receive the predetermination/authorization. Additionally, infusion medications may have a specific loading dose, or set of initial infusion appointments that are scheduled closer together, which can delay your first appointment if necessary times are not available.

### **What should I do before my appointment?**

**Drink plenty of water.** Being well hydrated will help make it easier to start your IV. Avoid excessive amounts of coffee prior to your infusion because it can be dehydrating. Avoid foods and activities that cause dehydration prior to your infusion, such as heavy exercise, salty foods and donating blood. Make sure you **arrive on time** for your appointment. If you are more than 15 minutes late, we may have to reschedule your infusion.

### **What is a ‘loading dose’?**

A loading dose is an initial set of scheduled infusions before beginning a more routine treatment plan that is determined by your physician. The loading dose allows for a drug to reach a therapeutic level at a quicker rate, with consecutive infusion therapy as lower maintenance doses.

### **What if my insurance company does not provide coverage for my treatment?**

If your insurance does not provide proper coverage or denies an authorization, your doctor will determine the next steps to take and what will work best for you.

### **Is infusion the same as chemotherapy?**

No. There are drugs used to treat autoimmune diseases that are classified as “chemotherapy drugs,” however, the dosage is much lower and less toxic than those used in cancer treatment.

### **How long does an infusion take?**

Depending on the type of medication you are having infused, it can take as little as 30 minutes up to 5 hours.

**Will I be able to use the restroom while being infused?**

Yes, we have a bathroom conveniently located near the infusion suite should you need to use it at any time.

**How often do I get infused?**

The frequency of your infusion therapy will be determined by your physician.

**Will it hurt?**

Most patients say, "I didn't feel anything at all," while others claim it feels like a small pinch and is comparable to getting their routine lab work done.

**How big is the needle?**

The needle size is very small; this size needle is often used on children in the hospital.

**Can I drive after receiving infusion?**

Yes; patients can safely transport themselves to and from infusion.

**Can I receive infusion if I am, or am planning on becoming pregnant?**

If you are planning on becoming pregnant, it is best to discuss this with your physician before starting infusions to determine the best treatment plan. If there is a chance you could be pregnant, please notify your physician or nurse as soon as possible.

**Are there any side effects to infusion therapy?**

Any side effects would be an allergic reaction that would likely happen while you're being infused. An allergic reaction may appear as itchiness, difficulty breathing or heavy pressure on your chest. Our trained nurses will be checking on you throughout your infusion, so if you have an allergic reaction they will assist you.

**Can I use Low Country Rheumatology's oxygen tank while receiving infusion?**

Our oxygen tank is for emergency purposes only. It is the patient's responsibility to bring enough oxygen for their commute to our facility, the length of appointment/infusion, and the commute from our facility.

**Where will my infusion take place?**

Low Country Rheumatology has an infusion suite at each of our locations: Summerville, Mount Pleasant and West Ashley.

Infusion Therapy is managed by our team of physicians and the experienced nurses here at Low Country Rheumatology. The staff is specially trained regarding all aspects of intravenous (IV) infusion including emergency procedures.

You will sit in a comfortable recliner during the therapy. You are welcome to take a nap during the procedure, or you can pass the time with a book, magazine, smart phone, computer or tablet. We also provide free Wi-Fi. Dress in layers for your own comfort. We offer blankets and you are welcome to bring additional blankets or pillows.

**Can I have a friend or family member sit with me?**

We do not allow friends or family members to sit with patients receiving infusion as it is a violation of privacy for other patients.

**Can I have my infant or child sit with me?**

We do not allow infants or children in the infusion suite as it is unsafe for both patient and child in the case of a medical event. Additionally, individuals receiving infusion have weakened immune systems and are at greater risk of illness when exposed to germs.

**Can I bring my service animal?**

In accordance with the ADA, we do allow service animals in the infusion suite. The service animal should meet the following requirements: the animal must be free of fleas, ticks, and intestinal parasites, has been screened by a veterinarian within the past twelve (12) months prior to entering the facility, has received all required inoculations, is clean and well-groomed, and presents no apparent threat to the health and safety of patients, visitors, employees or others. All animals must be supervised by persons who know the animal and its behavior and can control the animal.

**Am I allowed to bring a fire arm or weapon with me?**

In accordance with SC Law Enforcement Department, we do not allow any fire arms or weapons of any kind at any of our locations. It is unlawful for individuals, including those with permits, to carry a firearm into a medical facility without express permission authorized by the employer of the facility.

If you have any questions, feel free to call the infusion department at: (843) 572-8932. You can also stop by the Infusion Department prior to your appointment; we have plenty of educational pamphlets about your medication. You may also access information about your medication online at <http://www.lowcountryrheumatology.com/infusions/>