Pabau

Top 25 IV Therapy Complications & Adverse Reactions

A quick-reference guide for IV therapy clinics covering the most common complications, their signs and symptoms, risk factors, and recommended responses. Use this worksheet to train staff, build emergency protocols, and ensure patient safety during intravenous infusions.

RANK	CODE / DESCRIPTION
1	**Infiltration** IV fluid leaks into surrounding tissue causing swelling, coolness, and pain at the site
2	**Extravasation** Vesicant or irritant solution leaks into tissue, risking necrosis and permanent damage
3	**Phlebitis** Vein inflammation presenting as redness, warmth, tenderness, and a palpable cord
4	**Thrombophlebitis** Blood clot formation combined with vein inflammation, causing pain and swelling
5	**Air Embolism** Air enters the bloodstream via IV line, potentially causing chest pain and dyspnoea
6	**Fluid Overload** Excess IV fluid causes pulmonary oedema, hypertension, and respiratory distress
7	**Catheter Embolism** Fragment of catheter breaks off and enters the bloodstream requiring urgent retrieval
8	**Speed Shock** Rapid infusion causes systemic reaction including cardiac arrest and loss of consciousness
9	**Allergic Reaction** Hypersensitivity to infused solution causing urticaria, bronchospasm, or anaphylaxis
10	**Anaphylaxis** Severe systemic allergic response requiring immediate adrenaline and emergency care
11	**Haematoma** Blood collects outside the vein at the puncture site causing bruising and swelling

RANK	CODE / DESCRIPTION
13	**Vasovagal Response** Fainting or near-fainting triggered by needle insertion or anxiety during IV therapy
14	**Local Infection** Bacterial contamination at the insertion site causing redness, warmth, and purulent drainage
15	**Bloodstream Infection** Catheter-related bloodstream infection (CRBSI) presenting with fever and sepsis signs
16	**Venous Spasm** Sudden vein constriction causing pain and slowed infusion, often from cold solutions
17	**Electrolyte Imbalance** IV fluids alter sodium, potassium, or magnesium levels causing arrhythmias or confusion
18	**Hypoglycaemia** Abrupt discontinuation of dextrose-containing IV fluids causes dangerous blood sugar drop
19	**Hypothermia** Rapid infusion of cold IV fluids lowers core body temperature below safe levels
20	**Pulmonary Oedema** Fluid accumulates in the lungs due to excessive IV fluid administration
21	**Tissue Necrosis** Cell death from extravasated vesicant agents requiring surgical debridement
22	**Compartment Syndrome** Infiltrated fluid increases pressure in a fascial compartment, threatening limb viability
23	**Sepsis** Systemic inflammatory response to IV-related infection requiring immediate intervention
24	**Catheter Occlusion** IV catheter becomes blocked by fibrin, precipitate, or mechanical kinking

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25	**Hypervolaemia** Excessive intravascular volume from over-infusion causing cardiac strain and oedema