

# IV or not to IV?

As a previous hospital RD, IV (intravenous) fluids were the norm. Patients with cancer, those awaiting surgery, or those going through alcohol withdrawal were often attached to IVs. Anyone who was to be NPO (Latin for “nothing per oral” AKA nothing by mouth) for a procedure also got IV fluids for hydration.

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## A Round of IVs for Everyone

IV clinics are popping up to “cure hangovers, provide weight loss, anti-aging, and pain relief”, to name a few. Many of them claim to have concoctions for anxiety, brain health, immunity, metabolism, detoxification, and more.



An IV catheter is placed in your vein for fluids like saline (salt water) and vitamins to “cure” your hangover or hydrate you for the day ahead. I called a clinic and asked about the compounds in the “weight loss IV” and was told that “the vitamin alpha lipoic acid was added to break down fat in the liver”.

Alpha-lipoic acid is not a vitamin, it is a fatty acid produced in cells. One study found alpha-lipoic acid to be effective when combined with an electrical stimulating system. The study was done for 8 weeks and found better weight loss in obese subjects compared to placebo. 1

However, this supplement could be used orally with the same result. A study looking at the use of alpha-lipoic acid and obesity found that after 24 weeks, the supplement group had greater weight loss as well as decreases in triglycerides than the placebo group. 2

Another popular IV dubbed “high C” claims, “Vitamin C is essential for the growth, development, and repair of body tissues. It’s involved in essential body functions such as the formation of collagen, absorption of iron, the immune system, wound healing, and the health of cartilage, bones, and teeth.”

IV vitamin C therapy is controversial but may be attractive to cancer patients as a treatment. A recent study showed that high doses of vitamin C do not show anti-cancer activity and could interfere with chemotherapy. 3

Do you want more vitamin C? Include berries, melon, kiwi, and fresh or frozen green leafy vegetables in your diet daily. No IV is needed.

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## Cost of IV Therapy

Most therapies will cost roughly \$40 each and the “clinicians” suggest 3 to 5 per week for best results. This will cost the average person \$120/week, or \$480 per month. Most clinics are run by MAs (medical assistants) while some employ RNs.

Several of their other therapies (such as compression therapy, zero body dry float, and infrared sauna) are advised 2 to 7 times per week. Rich frat boys could pay for these “hangover cures”, but average cost-conscious consumers likely could not.



Recently, I saw the addition of Semaglutide, the latest injectable weight-loss drug on the market. While the injection needs an MD prescription, the medication will be adjusted by the staff at the IV clinic.

There were three weight loss programs offered: Naturopathic Weight Loss Plan: Boost Metabolism and Fat Burning, Medical Weight Loss Plan: Targeting Metabolic Processes, and Comprehensive Weight Loss Plan: A Combination Approach. The third one includes “contouring services” like body sculpting. None of the plans included or promoted a registered dietitian.

## IV Truth or IV BS?

I did find a knowledge base section on the website that featured various articles on each therapy. To be fair, a good majority came from peer-reviewed journals although many of the studies had few subjects (under 30) and some were outdated. Only two studies to support IV infusion were listed and one was in dialysis patients.

My advice is to ignore the hype and save your money.

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## Better Options for Health

A more affordable and less scammy way to take care of your health is in your hands. A hangover can be prevented by not drinking too much alcohol but when the party's over, you're on your own. I'd suggest:

- Two to three cups of water, a solid meal, some ibuprofen, and a multivitamin.
- Gatorade or other sports drink if you're too nauseous to eat
- Sleep it off
- Seek treatment if you're concerned about your alcohol intake.

## Anti-aging

- Stay out of the sun and wear sunscreen
- Limit alcohol
- Avoid fast food and processed food
- Get regular exercise and adequate sleep
- Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and healthy fats.
- Drink plenty of water

## For pain relief:

- Talk to your healthcare provider about physical therapy or medical massage
- Discuss pain management options
- Seek a second opinion if your pain is uncontrolled

## Sports Performance

- Hydrate often
- Eat balanced meals
- Hire a personal trainer or registered dietitian for individual advice

## Weight loss:

- Avoid fad diets
- Seek out a registered dietitian for counseling
- Get regular sleep
- Eat fewer ultra-processed foods
- Include adequate protein and fiber in your diet
- Drink water over sugary beverages, juice, and alcohol

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## References

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A hand-drawn graphic with the words "Thank You" in a cursive, handwritten font. The text is surrounded by several short, radiating lines, giving it a sunburst or starburst effect.