

Extravasation

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What is Extravasation?

You have been given this leaflet because you are having intravenous chemotherapy which carries a risk of Extravasation.

Extravasation is when some of the drugs treating your cancer leak into the tissue around the vein, instead of going into the vein. The leakage is called 'Extravasation'. Your healthcare team takes precautions to stop this happening, but it can sometimes still happen.

This information will explain how this leakage is being treated and how you can help.

What are the symptoms of Extravasation?

You may have noticed pain, stinging, swelling or changes to your skin at the site of the cannula (needle going into your vein), or the nurse may have noticed that the drug was not going into the vein as quickly as usual.

Why is Extravasation a problem?

The problems vary with different drugs but can include pain, stiffness and ulcers. The treatment you were given when the leakage was found should prevent some of the damage. We will continue to treat any damage until it has healed. Very occasionally patients will require plastic surgery to repair the damage caused by the Extravasation. If necessary your doctor will discuss this with you.

What treatments are used to prevent this?

The treatment will vary depending on the drug you are being given. The nurse may have given you any of these treatments:

- Using a syringe to draw back as much of the drug as possible
- Putting hot or cold packs on your arm
- Putting an antidote (something that stops the drug's action) on your skin, or injecting an antidote around the area
- Applying cream on your skin to help heal any damage.

This treatment will start as soon as the leakage is noticed. The nurse may put hot or cold packs on your skin or apply cream and may continue to do so for some hours afterwards. Following this, your doctor will check the damage regularly over the next few weeks. Your doctor will also arrange for any other treatment you might need.

Will I be able to continue with my treatment?

Your doctor will decide what the best way to continue your treatment is. It may be given in a different way, to reduce the chance of Extravasation happening again.

What can I do to help?

- Gently exercise your arm or hand
- Avoid wearing tight clothes around the area
- Avoid going out in strong sunlight
- Take mild painkillers if you need to. Your nurse or doctor can advise you which are suitable.

You will need to keep the area dry when you wash. Don't put the arm or hand that is affected into water. When you need to wash, gently clean the surrounding area with a wet wipe or damp flannel but don't rub.

Checking the damaged area

It's important to check your arm or hand once a day and tell us if there are any changes, so we can treat any problems quickly. Let us know straight away if:

- The damaged area has changed colour, or become more red
- The area is blistering, flaking or peeling
- It is more uncomfortable or more painful than it was
- The pain is making it difficult to exercise your arm or hand
- You are worried about anything else that is happening to your arm or hand.

Who should I contact if I need help or advice?

If you are worried or need advice, you can contact the Chemotherapy Department where you have your treatment. They are contactable any time, day or night, including weekends.

Lincoln and Grantham patients

Telephone: 01522 572261

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Evenings and weekends

Telephone: 01522 307198/307199

Boston patients

Telephone: 01205 446548

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Evenings and weekends

Telephone: 01205 445347

Chemotherapy Department

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www.accessable.co.uk/united-lincolnshire-hospitals-nhs-trust

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If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille, please email the Patient Information team at patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk