

What to do after an Extravasation

Information for patients



Leeds Cancer
Centre

During your Radiotherapy CT or MRI examination, you have experienced an extravasation when receiving contrast media (dye) through an injection.

Millions of imaging studies are performed with the use of contrast media (dye) each year. These are used to increase the amount of information we can obtain about your body during your planning scan.

What is extravasation?

Sometimes, when fluids or drugs are given into the bloodstream, they can leak out of the vein into the surrounding skin and tissues.

You may have noticed pain, stinging, swelling or other changes to the skin at the site of the cannula, or the Radiographer may have noticed that the dye isn't flowing into the vein easily.

Although extravasation may be an uncomfortable experience, and the effects may last for a few days, for the majority of patients there is no long-term damage. However, for a very small number of people, it can result in tissue damage around the site of the cannulation and, very rarely, further complications.

Why did this happen?

We don't always know why the drug has leaked into the tissues, although we know it can sometimes happen when giving intravenous contrast media (dye).

We do take many precautions to reduce the risk of extravasation but it is not possible to totally prevent it. The most important thing is that it has been detected and treated as quickly as possible.

What treatment have I received to prevent tissue damage?

The Radiotherapy team have given you the recommended treatment for the extravasation as soon as it was detected. Although this will help to reduce the likelihood of developing further problems, it is not unusual for the area to bruise or to feel uncomfortable.

What do I need to do?

1. Gently exercise the affected arm or hand. Take mild painkillers if you need to.
2. Raise the limb if possible.
3. Only apply lotions/creams to the affected area that have been recommended by the Radiographers.
4. Do not use soap on the affected area. After washing dry gently with a clean towel.
5. Avoid tight clothing around the affected area.
6. Do not expose the affected area to sunlight.

In addition, you should look at the area at least twice a day

- Has the area changed colour or increased in redness?
- Is the area blistering, peeling or flaking?
- Has the area become more uncomfortable?
- Is the pain making it difficult for you to exercise the arm or hand?

When should I contact you?

When looking at the affected area, if you have answered **YES** to any of the questions on the list above (in bold text) or have any other concerns then you should make contact with a healthcare professional using the following details:

Radiographers

- Telephone **(0113) 206 8159** and ask to speak to any of the Radiographers. (Available Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm).

All other times

- Contact either an Emergency Doctor (Walk-in Centre or A&E) or the NHS Helpline (online: 111.nhs.uk or telephone: **111** from a landline or mobile).

What did you think of your care?

Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/nhsleedsfft

Your views matter



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Developed by: Catriona Buchan Radiotherapy Advanced Practitioner & Joanne Dooling Radiotherapy Advanced Practitioner (Pre Treatment, Radiotherapy)
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