

**Patient  
Information**

# Extravasation (Accidental leaking of drugs)

## Information for oncology and haematology patients

### Introduction

This leaflet explains what extravasation is and how to care for your skin should this happen.

### What is extravasation?

Extravasation is when a small amount of a drug has accidentally leaked from the vein into the surrounding tissues. Extravasation is very rare, however if this leakage is left untreated, it could lead to serious damage to the skin.

Signs that show that there may be skin damage include an increase in redness, blistering and pain. Therefore, it is important that you follow the advice given to you by the nurse and the instructions in this leaflet.

**Drug name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Type of pack to be used: \_\_\_\_\_

Further treatment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Using a heat pack

A heat pack is used to increase the blood supply to the affected skin to help soak up the drug. The heat pack has a soothing effect and can help to ease any pain. There is a risk of burns or scalds if the heat pack is too hot. The skin must be checked often for signs of redness or blistering, if you notice any of these signs please remove the heat pack at once.

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Department

**Oncology**

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## Using a cold pack

A cold pack is used to reduce the blood supply to the affected skin which will help to prevent the leaked drug from spreading. Be careful not to burn your skin. Check your skin often; if the skin appears blotchy, white or blue remove the cold pack straight away.

## General advice

You should wrap your heat or cold pack in a clean cloth and apply for 30 minutes, 4 times a day for 2 days, to the affected skin. You are advised to keep the affected limb raised up to 15 to 25cm above the level of your heart for as long as possible for the first 24 hours following the leak.

## Application of dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) lotion

This lotion may be given to you by the nurse to take home and is used to help remove the leaked drug from your skin.

You should apply a thin layer to your skin as shown by the nurse. You must do this twice a day for 14 days. If you notice any skin blistering following the application of this lotion, please stop using it and contact the nurses via the Chemotherapy Helpline for advice. The number is at the end of this leaflet.

## Reducing pain

The nurse will give you some pain relief to take home, as you may experience pain or discomfort in the affected skin. You will be advised of how often to take this medication.

## Checking the area

Check the affected skin each day, before putting the hot or cold pack on, for the following:

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

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If you answered **yes** to any of the questions in the checklist above or if you have any other concerns then please contact the Chemotherapy Helpline. The number is at the end of this leaflet.

## Follow up appointment

The nurse will arrange a follow-up appointment for you, if necessary, so that the injury site can be assessed.

### Follow up appointment time and location:

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In the next few weeks a nurse may contact you by telephone to ask if you have any concerns about the skin where the extravasation happened.

## Contact information

### Chemotherapy Helpline

Tel: 0300 422 3444

This helpline is available 24 hours a day.

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