Caring For a Suspected or Actual Extravasation

This information explains how to care for a suspected or actual extravasation.

An extravasation (ex-tra-va-say-shun) is when a medication leaks from your vein into the tissue around it. This can cause skin irritation, blisters, and open wounds. It can happen anywhere an intravenous line (IV) is put into your skin.

You’re getting this information because there’s a chance that some of the medication you were given leaked into your tissue.

To reduce any pain and irritation you may have, follow the instructions below.

Caring for the Extravasation Site

- Apply a ________________ compress to the site 4 to 5 times a day for the next 48 hours (2 days). Leave the compress on for 20 minutes each time. This will help decrease the swelling and discomfort.

- Raise the affected area on a pillow as often as you can for the next 24 to 48 hours. This will help decrease the swelling and improve the blood supply to the area.

- Shower with a mild soap and gently dry the site. Don’t soak the site in anything.

- If your doctor gave you medication for the extravasation, follow your doctor’s instructions for applying it. Don’t use any other lotions, creams, or ointments on the site unless your doctor tells you to.

- Cover the site before you go outside to protect it from sunlight. Sunlight can increase irritation.

- Wear loose-fitting clothing around the site. Tight clothing can irritate it.
• Don’t massage or rub the area around the site.

**Call Your Doctor or Nurse if You Have:**

• Any changes to your site or the area around it, such as:
  - New or increased:
    - Pain
    - Redness or other skin color changes
    - Swelling
  - Broken skin near the site
  - Blisters or any fluid drainage near the site
  - Numbness, tingling, or change in sensation in the area near your site
  - Skin that feels warm or hot when you touch it
• Trouble moving the affected area, such as not being able to bend your arm
• A temperature of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher
• Any other questions or concerns

**Follow-Up Care**

If the medication that leaked was chemotherapy, your nurse will call you the day after the extravasation happened to check on you. Your nurse will continue to call you once a week for the next 3 to 6 weeks. Your nurse will let you know how long you’ll need to continue caring for your extravasation site.

It’s important to give your nurse a phone number so they can reach you. If you miss their call, call your nurse back at _________________.

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.