Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Caring for a Suspected or Actual Extravasation

This information explains how to care for a suspected or actual extravasation (ex-tra-va-say-shun).

An extravasation 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 (IV) line 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 swelling and discomfort.
- Raise the affected area on a pillow as often as you can for the next 24 to 48 hours. The affected area is the extravasation site and the area around it. Doing this will help decrease swelling and improve blood supply to the area.
- Shower with a mild soap and gently dry the site. Do not soak the site in anything.
- If your healthcare provider gave you medication for the extravasation, follow their instructions for putting it on the site. Do not put any other lotions, creams, or ointments on the site unless your healthcare provider tells you to.

- Cover the site before you go outside to protect it from sunlight. Sunlight can increase irritation.
- Avoid putting pressure on the site.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing around the site. Tight clothing can irritate it.
- Do not massage or rub the area around the site.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if you have:

- Any changes to the site or the area around it, such as:
  - New or worsening:
    - Pain or burning
    - 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 (feeling) in the area near the 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 fever 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. They will check on you and ask how you're feeling. Your nurse will continue to call you once a week for the next 3 to 6 weeks. They will let you know how long you will need to keep 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 _____.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you’re not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

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

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