Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

How to Use Povidone-Iodine to Manage a Lymphocele

This information explains how to use a povidone-iodine solution (such as Betadine®) to treat a lymphocele (a collection of fluid in your body).

About lymphoceles

After your procedure, you may get a lymphocele. A lymphocele is a collection of fluid that builds up in your body after a surgery or procedure. Your healthcare provider will place a catheter (thin, flexible tube) into the area to drain the fluid. If the fluid keeps draining, your healthcare provider may recommend you use a povidone-iodine solution to help stop it.

Povidone-iodine is a liquid usually used to clean a person's skin before a procedure. When it is put into the area where the fluid is collecting, it helps seal the walls of the area. This closes the space so fluid stops building up. This process is called sclerosis.

How to flush your lymphocele with povidone-iodine

Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for how often to do this.

1. Gather the supplies your nurse gave you on a clean surface. You'll need:
    - 1 (5 mL) syringe
    - A bottle of povidone-iodine solution (such as Betadine®)
    - The container your nurse gave you
    - 2 alcohol wipes

2. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
3. Pour the amount of povidone-iodine solution your healthcare provider told you to use into the container.
4. Place the tip of the syringe into the container. Pull the plunger to fill the syringe with the solution.
5. Place the syringe down on the table. Make sure the tip of the syringe does not touch anything.
6. Sit or lie comfortably. Turn the stopcock toward the drainage bag.
7. Rub the needleless connector on the stopcock with an alcohol wipe for 15 to 30 seconds.
8. Place the syringe onto the needleless connector.
9. Hold the connector while you push and turn the syringe clockwise (to the right) to lock it into position.
10. Push the plunger of the syringe to push the povidone-iodine solution into your catheter. Never pull back on the plunger. Always push forward.
    - If you have any of the following while flushing, do not try to put any more povidone-iodine into your catheter. Stop and call your healthcare provider's office if you:
        - Feel pain
        - Have trouble pushing the povidone-iodine solution into the catheter
        - See leaking around the catheter
11. When the syringe is empty, turn it to the left and remove it. Throw the syringe away in your regular trash.
12. Leave the stopcock turned towards the drainage bag for 1 to 2 hours to allow the povidone-iodine to work.
13. After 1 to 2 hours, turn the stopcock back to the direction of the needleless connector. You'll see fluid drain into the bag.

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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