Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Instructions After Your Apheresis Procedure

This resource explains how to care for yourself after your apheresis (a-feh-REE-sis) procedure. In this resource, the words “you” and “your” refer to you or your child.

About your apheresis procedure

Apheresis is a procedure done to take out parts of your blood that cause an illness or make it worse. It is also done to collect healthy parts of blood, such as platelets and plasma, from donors.

During apheresis, blood is taken out of a person’s body and put through a machine. The machine separates the blood into 4 different parts. It takes out 1 or more of these parts and puts the rest of the blood back into the body:

- Red blood cells
- White blood cells
- Platelets
- Plasma

The healthy parts of the blood are then given to patients to treat certain illnesses.

After your apheresis procedure

If you had intravenous (IV) lines in your arms, your nurse will take them out after your procedure. They’ll cover each IV site (the place on your arm where the IV was) with a bandage. This will help keep the site from bleeding.

Leave the bandages on for at least 3 hours. Do not leave them on for longer than 5 hours. Leaving them on for more than 5 hours can cut off your circulation (blood flow).

If there is bleeding when you take the bandages off, apply gentle but firm pressure on the IV sites. Press firmly on the sites with a clean, dry gauze pad, towel, or cloth. Keep pressing for 3 to 5 minutes. Apply pressure until the bleeding stops. **If the bleeding does not stop, call your healthcare provider.**

If your tunneled catheter was used during the procedure, your nurse will flush and recap it.

Bruising or swelling

After your procedure, you may have bruising or swelling at the IV sites. If you do, place a cold compress on the sites every 15 minutes, as needed. You can use an ice pack or a cool washcloth.

Do not keep the cold compress on the sites for more than 15 minutes at a time. Leaving it on longer than 15 minutes at a time can damage your skin and nerves.

You can use a cold compress for the first 24 hours (1 day) after your procedure.

After 24 hours, you may still have discomfort at the IV sites. If you do, place a warm compress on the sites every 15 minutes, as needed. You can use a heating pad or a warm washcloth. Do not keep the warm compress on the sites for more than 15 minutes at a time. That can damage your skin and nerves.

Make sure the warm compress is not too hot before putting it on the sites. Be careful not to burn yourself.

If you still have discomfort at the IV sites after several days, call your healthcare provider. It's important to do this if the bruising or swelling is getting worse.

Fatigue

After your procedure, you may have mild fatigue (feeling more tired and weak than usual). Ask your healthcare provider when you can go back to doing your normal activities. Most people can right away.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if you have any of these:

- A fever of 100.4 °F (38 °C) or higher.
- Flu-like symptoms, such as:
  - Chills
  - Muscle or body aches
  - Cough
  - Sore throat
  - Runny nose
  - Fatigue
  - Vomiting (throwing up)
- Any redness, bleeding, drainage, swelling, or pain around your tunneled catheter site or at the IV sites.
- Numbness or tingling in your lips, hands, or feet.
- A lot of pain on the left side of your body.
- A bad headache and any neurological (nerve) changes, such as:
  - Changes in your vision.
  - Changes in your short-term or long-term memory.
  - Changes in your mobility (your ability to move).
  - A hard time speaking.
  - Any other concerning symptoms.

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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