PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Intraperitoneal Chemotherapy

This information will help you prepare for your intraperitoneal (IP) chemotherapy.

About Your IP Therapy

Your peritoneal space is the area between the muscles and organs in your abdomen (belly). There is a little fluid in between the peritoneal lining and your organs.

In IP chemotherapy, medication is mixed with fluids and injected directly into your peritoneal space through an access port. Before you begin IP chemotherapy, you will have an access port placed into a pocket under your skin near your ribcage. The catheter (thin, flexible tube) will be inserted into your peritoneal space (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Your peritoneal space
The port has a raised chamber. On top of the chamber is a self-sealing rubber septum (disc). The chamber also has a side arm for attaching the catheter (see Figure 2). You may see or feel the port under your skin. This is normal.

![Figure 2. The port and catheter](image)

During IP chemotherapy, the medication comes into direct contact with the cancer in your peritoneal space. The medication is left in the space to surround the cancer. This method allows a higher concentration of the medication to be given. Your nurse will teach you about the medication that will be used for your IP chemotherapy.

You may receive your IP chemotherapy as an inpatient or an outpatient. The type of cancer you have and the medication that you need will determine:

- Where you will receive your IP chemotherapy.
- How many treatments you will have.
- How long your therapy will last.

Some people may need to switch between having intravenous (through a vein) therapy and IP chemotherapy given at different times.

**Preparing for Your IP Chemotherapy**

- Eat a light dinner the night before and a light breakfast on the morning of your treatment.
Dress comfortably on the morning of your treatment. Wear loose fitting shirts and pants with an elastic band or a draw string.

If you wish, bring a music player so you can listen to music during treatment. There will be a TV in the room where you receive your treatment. Someone can also stay with you during your treatment.

You can bring food and drinks with you into the treatment room.

Arrange for someone to take you home

You must have a responsible care partner take you home after your procedure. Make sure to plan this before the day of your procedure.

If you don’t have someone to take you home, call one of the agencies below. They will send someone to go home with you. There’s usually a charge for this service, and you will need to provide transportation.

**Agencies in New York**
- Partners in Care: 888-735-8913
- Caring People: 877-227-4649

**Agencies in New Jersey**
- Caring People: 877-227-4649

During Your IP Chemotherapy

During your IP chemotherapy, you will need to lie down in your bed or chair unless you need to go to the bathroom. You may receive fluids or medication intravenously.

Your nurse will put a needle through your skin and into the self-sealing disc on the port chamber. This will feel like a small pinprick. They will tape the needle in place and cover it with a small dressing.

The fluid and medication mixture will be in a bag that is attached to the needle. This mixture will flow into your peritoneal space. You may need to have more solution after your treatment to make sure the medication fills your peritoneal space.

After the solution has flowed into your peritoneal space, your nurse will remove the needle and place a bandage on the site. This bandage can be removed after about 30 minutes.
If you’re inpatient and unable to get out of bed, your nurse will ask you to move from side to side in bed a few times. This will help move the solution throughout your peritoneal space. Your IP chemotherapy will then be complete and you can get out of bed. The solution will be absorbed by your body over the next few days.

If you’re an outpatient, make sure you move around for the next hour after your treatment is finished. This allows the medication to reach all parts of your peritoneal space.

The treatment time varies, but it is usually no more than 1½ to 2 hours. Some treatments may last as long as 6 hours because of the extra IV fluid that has to be given. Ask your doctor or nurse how long your treatment may take.

**Side Effects of IP Chemotherapy**

The side effects of IP chemotherapy are different depending on the person. Below are the most common side effects and ways to relieve them. The side effects may be caused by the amount of fluids that are injected into your peritoneal space during your IP chemotherapy or by the medication itself. You may have none, some, or all of these.

**Abdominal pressure or bloating**

- After your treatment is finished, try to walk around. This will help with the pressure or bloating. Wear comfortable clothes, such as pants with an elastic band, for your treatments and for a few days after your treatments.

**Full bladder or frequent need to urinate**

- Try to empty your bladder just before you start your treatments. You can also use the bathroom during your treatments.

**Faster breathing**

- Raise your head on a pillow during your treatment. When your treatment is finished, you can walk around or sit upright in a chair.

**Nausea and vomiting**

- Your doctor or nurse may give you an antinausea medication before or
during your IP chemotherapy. Your doctor may also prescribe this medication for you to take at home as needed.

**Decreased appetite**

- Try to eat smaller meals more often and drink liquid nutritional supplements.

**Caring for Your Peritoneal Port at Home**

Since the access port is under your skin, you don’t need to cover or bandage it. You can bathe and shower as you usually do. You can follow your normal diet.

Having a port and catheter shouldn’t limit your activities. Ask your doctor or nurse about going back to your normal activities.

Inspect the skin around your port daily and call your doctor or nurse if there are any problems.

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

- Severe or constant stomach pain
- A temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Redness, swelling, or tenderness in the area around your port site
- Leaking or drainage from your port site
- Nausea or vomiting that lasts more than 24 hours
- Diarrhea that lasts more than 24 hours
- Constipation that lasts more than 24 hours
- An inability to eat or drink for more than 24 hours
- Any unexpected or unexplained problems
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.