

Division of Imaging

Information for Patients

What to do if the contrast (liquid) injection leaks out (extravasation)

This leaflet contains further information on what you should do if the contrast (liquid) injection that you were given for your Magnetic Resonance (MR) or Computerised Tomography (CT) scan has leaked out under your skin (extravasation). If you have any further questions, please speak to the doctor or radiographer caring for you.

What is Extravasation?

Contrast dyes (liquids) that are given to patients having an MR or CT scan are usually given by injection into a vein in your arm or hand. Occasionally the injection may leak out from your vein into the tissues under the skin – this is known as extravasation.

If this has happened, you may experience a stinging sensation where the contrast has gone into the tissue and it can be painful. This will usually wear off after about 30 minutes.

You may also have some swelling of your arm or hand – please read the paragraph below on what to do if this happens. Sometimes you may need another injection of contrast and if this is necessary, this will be discussed with you.

What will happen if there has been a leak?

We will massage and elevate your arm as soon as the leak happens. A cold compress will be applied to the area if required and, if possible, we will then continue with your scan. If the extravasation is severe, a doctor will examine you before you leave the department and advise you if any further treatment is necessary.

Is there anything I can do at home?

Massage the area where the contrast has gone into your tissue.

If there is swelling

- Elevate your affected arm as much as possible. At night, keep it elevated on two pillows (you should continue to do this until the swelling has gone down).

- Use an icepack or a bag of frozen vegetables wrapped in a clean tea towel over the site. Never place ice directly on your skin as it may cause frostbite, and do not leave it on for more than 15 minutes at a time.

If the area is painful, take your usual pain relief medication.

Is there anything more I need to look out for?

In most cases this is a minor injury and does not require any further treatment. However, in a small number of cases the injury may become more severe and result in you needing to seek medical attention.

Important

If you experience any of the following symptoms once you have left the hospital, you should seek advice from your GP or attend your local accident and emergency (A&E) department and take this leaflet with you:

- The pain becomes more severe and is not controlled by simple pain relief medication.
- There is increased swelling of your arm or hand.
- Your arm or hand changes in colour.
- You have pins and needles or altered sensation in your arm or hand.
- You have blistering or ulceration of the skin around the injection site.

Contact us

For contact information please refer to your appointment letter or if you are an inpatient please direct your queries to one of the medical staff on the ward

Language and accessible support services:

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

Your comments and concerns

If you would like to provide feedback you can:

- Ask to speak to the department lead / manager.
- Write to us: Patient Advice and Liaison Services, 1st Floor, Cobbett House, Manchester Royal Infirmary, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9WL.
- Log onto the Patient Opinion website www.patientopinion.org.uk/ click on 'Tell your Story'

If you would like to discuss a concern or make a complaint:

Ask to speak to the department manager – they may be able to help straight away.

Inpatients can speak to a senior nurse or manager by contacting the Tell Us Today service on (0161) 701 1999.

Contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (0161) 276 8686 email: pals@mft.nhs.uk. Ask for our information leaflet.

We welcome your feedback so we can continue to improve our services.

NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

Telephone: 111, 24 hours a day

Website: www.111.nhs.uk

To be completed by the MR or CT radiographer

Contrast agent
Date and time
Amount of contrast extravasated
Amount of saline extravasated
Site of extravasation