

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

This leaflet contains further information on what you should do if the contrast injection that you were given for your MRI or CT scan has leaked out under your skin (extravasation).

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

## What is extravasation?

Contrast dyes that are given to patients having an MRI or CT scan are usually given by injection into a vein in your arm or hand. Occasionally the injection may leak out from the vein to the tissues under the skin – this is known as extravasation. If this has happened, you will 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 the 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 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 the 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 the tissue.
- If there is swelling:
  - elevate the 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 ice-pack or a bag of frozen vegetables wrapped in a clean tea towel over the site. Never place ice directly on 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 painkillers.

## Is there anything I need to look out for?

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

### Important

If you experience any of the following symptoms, 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 painkillers
- There is increased swelling of the arm or hand
- The arm or hand changes in colour
- There are pins and needles or altered sensation in the arm or hand
- There is blistering or ulceration of the skin around the injection site.

### To be completed by the MRI or CT radiographer

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

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your **MRI scan with contrast**, please contact the MRI department on **020 7188 3933** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

If you have any questions or concerns about your **CT scan with contrast**, please contact the CT department at Guy's on **020 7188 5570** or St Thomas' on **020 7188 5467** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

If you have any questions or concerns about your **radiotherapy CT scan with contrast**, please contact the radiotherapy pre-treatment area on **020 7188 1450** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

Outside these hours, please contact your GP or go to your local accident and emergency (A&E) department for advice.

### Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

For information about any medicines that you have been prescribed at Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals, you can speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline:

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PAKS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' t: 020 7188 8803 at Guy's e: [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

### Language Support Services

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

t: 020 7188 8815 fax: 020 7188 5953

Leaflet number: 3575/VER3

Date published: July 2014

Review date: January 2017

© 2014 Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust