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Contrast Extravasation

When contrast leaks outside the vein

This handout explains what a contrast extravasation is, how it is treated, and symptoms to watch for.

What is a contrast extravasation?

During your *computed tomography* (CT) scan or *magnetic resonance imaging* (MRI) scan, you were given *contrast* (X-ray dye) through an *intravenous* (IV) line. Contrast helps your veins and arteries show up clearly on the scan.

For some tests, contrast must be injected very quickly. But, the faster it is given, the greater the risk of a *contrast extravasation*. This occurs when contrast leaks into the tissue around a vein. It happens in only 1 out of every 250 to 500 procedures.

Can extravasation be prevented?

Your safety is our top priority. To prevent extravasation, we made sure we had good access to your vein from the IV. Also, a member of our staff stayed with you during your scan so that any extravasation could be found early.

But, even with good IV access and staff watching nearby, extravasations still happen.



A member of our hospital staff stayed nearby during your scan to watch for extravasation.

How was my extravasation treated?

To treat your extravasation, we:

- Asked you to raise your arm
- Put pressure on your IV site
- Used an ice pack to help limit pain

What do I need to do next?

After you leave the Radiology department, follow these steps:

- Place an ice pack on the affected areas for 20 minutes every hour for the next 24 hours, while you are awake. Do **not** put the ice directly on your skin. Wrap the ice in a clean towel or cloth.
- After the first 24 hours, apply warm compresses for comfort.
- If you still have pain, discomfort, or swelling after 1 week, ask your primary care provider to check your extravasation site.

When to Call

It is rare for more treatment to be needed. But, call your doctor if you have:

- Pain that does not go away
- Swelling or redness at the IV site
- A strange color in your skin at the IV site
- Redness that goes up your arm
- New numbness or weakness in your hand

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., please call:

- UWMC - Montlake Imaging Services/Radiology:**
206.598.6214, option 2
- UWMC – Northwest Imaging Services/Radiology:**
206.598.6214, option 2
- Harborview Medical Center Nurse Advice Line:**
206.520.7501
- Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center:** 206.606.7200

Urgent Care

If you are having severe pain, sudden loss of sensation (numbness) in your hand or fingers, or are suddenly not able to move your fingers, **go to your nearest ER or urgent care right away.**

Other Instructions
