

Having intrathecal chemotherapy in your spine (up to age 24)

Cancer and Haematology Services

Information for Patients

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What is intrathecal chemotherapy?

Intrathecal chemotherapy is an injection of drugs to treat cancer. It is given into the fluid which surrounds the brain and spinal cord. This fluid is called Cerebrospinal Fluid (CSF).

Chemotherapy is given through a needle. It is inserted into the lower part of your spine.

Why do I need intrathecal chemotherapy?

In some blood cancers, the cells can pass into the Cerebrospinal Fluid (CSF). Intrathecal chemotherapy is a direct way to treat cancer in the CSF. It prevents cancer spreading to this area.

There are 3 types of drugs that are usually given this way.

These are:

- Methotrexate
- Cytarabine
- Hydrocortisone

What will happen before the procedure?

You/your child needs to have a blood test a few days before the procedure. It is to see if you can go ahead with the procedure.

If you/your child are on medicine to thin your blood (anti-coagulation) you will need to stop this. Please talk to your doctor/nurse about this.

If you are taking oral methotrexate this will not be given in the same week as the intrathecal chemotherapy. Speak to your doctor/nurse to find out when to stop this medicine.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

Can I be put to sleep when I have intrathecal chemotherapy?

All children usually have a general anaesthetic/sedation when having this procedure. Some teenagers and young adults choose to have it done whilst they are awake. They have local anaesthetic around the site before the procedure to numb the area.

General anaesthetic fasting times

If you or your child are having the procedure done under general anaesthetic then there are a few rules to follow.

- Patients can eat up until 12am of the morning of the procedure. They can drink water until 8am on the day of the procedure.
- Patients can only have water or very diluted squash after 3am
- **No milk** or pure juices are allowed. They are classed as food.
- You/your child cannot have chewing gum on the day of the procedure. It affects stomach (gastric) acid production. It can make you sick (vomit).

What happens on the day of the procedure?

We give planned intrathecal chemotherapy in theatre on Ward 27 Daycare.

You will need to arrive at Ward 27 Daycare reception by 8am.

You/ your child will be able to talk about any concerns before the procedure.

You/your child will have an assessment by nurses. These include:

- blood pressure
- temperature
- heart rate
- weight and height

You will also give consent for the procedure.

You will wear 2 patient identification wristbands.

For patients aged 16 years or under, you may be taken to the Children's Day Care Unit. This is opposite Ward 27. You will recover here if there are no beds available.

After the procedure is done it is best to lie down flat for at least 1 to 2 hours. This is to try to stop any headaches and being sick.

What happens when I go to theatre?

If you are having general anaesthetic/sedation 1 family member/partner can come with you when you go into theatre.

There will be a few people in the room. They will:

- be looking after you when you have general anaesthetic/sedation
- are checking and giving your intrathecal chemotherapy

Your family member/partner will leave after the anaesthetist (a doctor who is trained in giving anaesthetic) has started the medicine and you begin to get sleepy.

If you are having the procedure awake you can take 1 family member/partner in with you for support. We will put numbing cream on the site before procedure. The cream can stay on for 1 hour. Please check for any allergic reactions to the site such as redness or itchiness. A nurse will remove it for you.

How is the intrathecal chemotherapy given?

Intrathecal chemotherapy is given by having a lumbar puncture. A needle is put between 2 of the spinal bones in your lower back. Sometimes if this is not possible, we give the treatment through an Ommaya reservoir in the head. This is called intraventricular chemotherapy.

There are 2 ways to have this procedure:

1. The most common way is to lie on your left side with your knees drawn up to your chest.
2. If you are awake you can sit on the bed and lean over a table.

Both open up the spaces between your spinal bones.

The doctor will clean your back with an antiseptic sponge. They will let it dry for a couple of minutes. If you are awake we will give an injection of local anaesthetic around the site. This will numb it before we do anything else.

The doctor will then insert the needle into the space between your spinal bones in the lower back. We will take a sample of your CSF. It will be sent to the lab (10 to 15 drops of fluid).

The intrathecal chemotherapy will be in a syringe and connected to the needle. We inject it slowly. The needle is then removed.

We put a dressing on the site. You can take it off after 24 hours.

Please check the site for any signs of infection such as redness, swelling or pain. If there are any concerns please contact Ward 27 Daycare, 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday or Ward 27 out of hours.



Side effects

You should lie down flat after the procedure for 1 to 2 hours. This will stop headaches which is the most common side effect. Headaches normally happen within the first 24 hours. If it gets worse despite pain relief medicine such as oramorph or codeine or you start to be sick, please contact ward 27 for advice.

Drink plenty of fluids after the procedure. It can help stop headaches.

Your back may feel sore. You may have shooting pains in your legs. This should settle within 48 hours. If symptoms do not stop or get worse contact Ward 27 Daycare 8am to 6pm or Ward 27.

Contact details

Children and young adults treated on ward 27 phone:

- Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm: **0116 204 7801**
- Outside of hours including overnight & weekends: **0116 258 5959**

Adult patients treated in Osborne building phone:

- Haematology helpline 24 hours 7 days a week: **0808 178 2212**

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

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