

Extravasation

This leaflet explains what an extravasation injury is and the care required if it occurs while you are having treatment at St George's Hospital.

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

What is an extravasation injury?

These are complications that can occur when medications or fluids are being given intravenously (IV) via a cannula or central venous access device. An extravasation is when there has been a leakage of medication or fluids from the vein into the surrounding tissues.

What are the symptoms of an extravasation?

You may notice stinging, burning, swelling and pain around the infusion site. There may also be some redness or blistering to the skin and damage to the underlying tissues.

What can I do to help?

The infusion site will be inspected at regular times by the nursing staff. You can assist by informing the nurse of any changes you feel including pain or burning at the site of the cannula or central venous access device.

Why did this happen?

Although rare, an extravasation is a known complication of having medications or fluids given via the IV route. The cannula or central venous access device can become dislodged from the blood vessel or the vessel may collapse. Some medicines have more potential to cause extravasation than others. It is impossible to completely prevent an extravasation but we take all possible precautions.

Why is an extravasation a problem?

Due to the potential of damage to the surrounding tissue, it is important that an extravasation is detected quickly and treated accordingly, as it can lead to swelling, pain and tissue damage / loss.

How is an extravasation treated?

The treatment suggested will be dependent on the medicine that has extravasated and how much has infused. If possible, you will be asked to elevate and observe the area. After discussion with the team looking after you and / or the plastic surgery team, a decision will be made as to whether the surrounding tissue needs to be 'washed out' to reduce the extent of tissue damage.

The 'wash out' will be carried out by an appropriately trained practitioner. Local anaesthetic will be injected into the area prior to the 'wash out' to make it numb. Small puncture wounds will be made in the skin around the cannula or central venous access device entry site and then saline (salt water) will be washed through the affected tissue and out via the puncture wounds. A dressing will be applied to the area once the procedure is completed.

The area will be reviewed within 24 hours of the 'wash out' and any wound or tissue loss will be managed as per the Trust's Wound Management Policy.

If you suffer an extravasation, the treatment and management will be discussed with you but you can assist by:

- Moving the area as normal – you will be told if you need to keep the area still.
- Elevating the affected area (if possible) when at rest.
- Maintaining the dressing (if required) and keep it dry and intact.
- Do not apply lotions, creams or ointments to the area unless instructed to do so by a doctor or nurse.

Will I require follow up once I am discharged from hospital?

This is dependent on the extent of your injury. If the injury does need to be seen following discharge you will either be advised to make an appointment to see the practice nurse at your GP surgery or you may be given an appointment to attend the plastic surgery dressing clinic. This will be explained to you prior to your discharge.

Contact us

If you have any questions about your extravasation, please don't hesitate to speak to the medical or nursing team caring for you.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

NHS UK provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: PLS_EXV_LP_01 Published: July 2024 Review date: July 2026