

The ROYAL MARSDEN

NHS Foundation Trust

Phlebitis – following insertion of a device such as cannula or PICC

Patient Information



NHS

What is phlebitis?

Phlebitis is the inflammation of the wall of a vein.

The signs and symptoms are redness along the vein, pain and/or swelling. Sometimes the vein can become discoloured and feel hard and tender.

What causes phlebitis?

Phlebitis is caused by chemicals, such as antibiotics or chemotherapy drugs such as EC or by mechanical irritation of the vein by the device such as a cannula.

Can you prevent it?

We try very hard to prevent it by diluting the drugs you receive so they are not too concentrated and therefore do not irritate your vein.

We always put the smallest size device into your vein to reduce the mechanical irritation.

A heat pack can be used during the infusion which may relieve discomfort at the time of treatment.

What can be done to relieve my symptoms?

Warmth, like a covered hot water bottle and resting the arm on a pillow, may relieve any pain and inflammation.

Some patients have found ibuprofen gel (ibugel) helpful. This can be brought over the counter at your local chemist.

Please call us if the symptoms do not improve, if you are concerned or wish to ask any questions.

Contact details

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899
(available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre

Telephone: Chelsea 020 7811 8438 / 020 7808 2083

Sutton 020 8661 3759 / 3951

Email: patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk

No conflicts of interest were declared in the production of this booklet.

Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.

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