

## Intravenous infiltration in the radiology/radiotherapy department

You have been given an intravenous (IV) drug into a vein to help provide clearer images for your radiology/radiotherapy scan. Occasionally drugs leak into the surrounding tissue, causing discomfort. This information sheet explains what infiltration is and how we manage it.

### What is infiltration?

Infiltration is when a non-vesicant drug (a drug which does not damage the tissue) has leaked outside of the vein into the surrounding tissue. You may have noticed an aching pain or swelling where the cannula (small plastic tube) or needle goes into the vein. The radiographer or nurse may have noticed changes in the flow rate during the administration of the drug.

### Why is infiltration a problem?

If infiltration goes untreated, it can lead to discomfort and aching stiffness in the limb where the drug or solution infiltrated. The important thing is that we have noticed and treated it.

### What treatment is given to prevent tissue damage?

The radiographers or nurses stop giving the drug as soon as the infiltration is noticed. We then remove the cannula from the vein and press on the affected area. After this, we apply a cold pack to the area for 20 minutes and monitor the swelling. Before you leave the department, you will be seen by one of our radiology doctors or an Advanced Nurse Practitioner, who will examine the infiltrated area.

### What do I need to do?

Gently exercise the affected arm or hand. You also need to look at the area every day to make sure the treatment has worked. Check for the following:

- Has the area changed colour or increased in redness?
- Is the area blistering, peeling or flaking?
- Is the area uncomfortable or painful?
- Is there any numbness or tingling in the limb?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions above or you have any other concerns, please contact us.

**The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline:** 020 8915 6899

(available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

