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NHS Foundation Trust

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# Managing your ambulatory chemotherapy pump at home

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**Medical Day Unit**

**Patient Information**



**NHS**



## Introduction

This leaflet outlines the purpose of your ambulatory chemotherapy pump and how to safely manage it once you have left the hospital.

## How does the pump work?

Ambulatory chemotherapy pumps use a ‘balloon’ to safely hold medication inside a plastic bottle, for example Fluorouracil (5FU) or Trabectedin chemotherapy. A small connector called a flow restrictor (referred to as the heat sensor) uses your body temperature to control the speed at which your medication flows into the tubing and through your PICC or Port. Depending on your treatment, it may take 1–5 days for the infuser to empty completely. We will provide you with a pouch to carry the pump in at your first treatment appointment. This can be used at home to safely carry the pump at all times. Please bring the pouch each time you have treatment.



Start of infusion



End of infusion

## How to safely manage your pump at home

### Do

- Keep the pump waist high or close to the same level as your PICC or Port
- Sleep with the pump next to you in bed
- Ensure the heat sensor is taped to your skin for the duration of the infusion
- Ensure the clamp is always open if your line has a clamp (yours may not)
- Ensure your PICC or Port is flushed as soon as possible after the pump finishes to prevent blockages.

### Do not

- Place the pump on the floor or on a high table while sleeping
- Expose the pump to extreme heat or cold (keep away from radiators, for example if placing the pump beside you)
- Submerge the pump in water (and avoid getting your PICC/ Port wet during infusion – we will provide you with a shower sleeve if you have a PICC)
- Place the pump in direct sunlight
- Drop the bottle or cause tension that will pull on the connection at your PICC or Port.

## How to disconnect your pump

1. Wash your hands or wear gloves if provided.
2. Ensure the balloon is empty using the black progress lines on the bottle.
3. Close the tubing clamp if you have a Port.

4. Disconnect between the closed system and the bung by twisting anti-clockwise.
5. Place the bottle with the tubing into the cytotoxic sharps bin provided.
6. Clean the bung at the end of your PICC or Port with a 2% Chlorhexidine swab for 30 seconds and wait until it has dried afterwards.
7. Flush the line with two 10ml pre-filled 0.9% saline syringes (total of 20mls) by gently twisting it clockwise onto the bung and use a push-pause technique.
8. Untwist the syringe in an anti-clockwise direction and discard of this in the cytotoxic sharps bin.
9. Remove gloves (if wearing) and place inside the cytotoxic waste bin.
10. Close the lid and the purple square opening at the top securely until they both click shut.
11. Wash your hands.
12. If you have a Port, watch the video below for instructions on how to remove the needle.



You can watch the video *How to disconnect a chemotherapy pump* on The Royal Marsden Patient Information Library via [www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/ivtherapy](http://www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/ivtherapy)

## Frequently asked questions

### 1. Why do I need a pump?

Your healthcare team have decided that using an ambulatory chemotherapy pump is the best way to obtain your treatment. The pump allows you to receive your treatment without having to stay in the hospital overnight, which limits time spent in the hospital and allows you to maintain your independence.

### 2. How do I know the pump is infusing?

Use the lines on the plastic outer bottle to check the balloon size against these lines to see if it is gradually getting smaller (see below).



Infusion progress. Illustration courtesy of Anjello Alcantara

### 3. How do I dispose of the pump?

If you decide to remove the pump yourself at home, place the whole pump bottle and the tubing into a purple waste bin and seal the lid completely. Bring this with you to your next appointment for the hospital to dispose of it safely.

### 4. What should I do if the heat sensor comes away from my skin?

If you notice the heat sensor is no longer stuck down to your skin, reapply a dressing or tape provided to secure it.

**5. What should I do if the clamp is closed?**

If your PICC/Port has a clamp and you notice it is closed, open it straight away and contact The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline for further advice.

**6. My pump has not finished when it was supposed to, what should I do?**

Check the size of the balloon and the time your pump was scheduled to empty. Call The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline for advice. It may be necessary for you to come into hospital for a nurse to check the progress of the infusion or remove the pump.

**7. What do I do if I have sudden chest pain?**

Call **999** immediately. You will need to stop the infusion by either closing the clamp to your Port or disconnecting from a PICC line. See page 2–3 for disconnection instructions.

**Contact details**

**Medical Day Unit (MDU) Sutton:** 020 8661 3174

**Medical Day Unit (MDU) Chelsea:** 020 7808 2320/5

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

You can ring the hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Call us straight away if you are feeling unwell or are worried about the side effects of cancer treatments.

This service provides specialist advice and support to all Royal Marsden patients, as well as to their carers, and both hospital and community-based doctors and nurses caring for Royal Marsden patients.

## 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](mailto:patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk)

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

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[royalmarsden.org](http://royalmarsden.org)

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