

Extravasation of contrast media

During some X-ray examinations, you will need to have an injection of a 'contrast agent' into an artery or vein. Occasionally this contrast agent can leak out of the blood vessel (extravasation) into the surrounding tissues. This can lead to swelling, bruising and pain at the site of the injection. The contrast agent will be absorbed by the surrounding tissues usually within a couple of days, but you may continue to feel some discomfort for a few days longer.

During the injection you may have felt:

- pain at the site of the injection
- tightness or pressure around the injection site.

Before you leave the hospital, the radiologist (X-ray doctor) or radiographer will explain what has happened and any problems that this may cause and tell you what to look out for.

Over the next few days you should:

- drink plenty of fluids
- apply a cold compress to the injection site 1 - 3 times a day
- if possible, keep the injection site elevated (raised)
- take your usual painkillers for any localised pain.

Any swelling, pain, or bruising could get worse before it gets better.

You should check the injection site two to three times daily for any of the following signs:

- blistering of the skin at the site of the injection
- reddening of the skin, or any change in skin colour around the injection site
- any feeling of heat or coldness of the skin at or around the injection site
- any hard swelling that is still present after three days.

If you experience any of these symptoms or have any other concerns, you should contact your GP for further advice.

