



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Contrast injection – extravasation guidance

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

**North Yorkshire Breast Screening Service**

Magnolia Centre

York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

Telephone: 01904 725590 or 01904 725591

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## **What is extravasation?**

Contrast dyes are usually given to patients having a CESM by an injection into a vein in your arm or your hand. Occasionally, during the injection, the contrast may leak out from the vein to the tissues under the skin – this is known as extravasation. There is less than a one in 1000 risk of this happening.

If this has happened, you will experience a stinging sensation where the contrast dye has gone into the tissue, and it can be painful. You may also have some swelling of the arm or hand, please read the paragraph below on what to do if this happens.

## **What will happen if there has been a leak?**

The radiographer will massage and elevate your arm as soon as the leak happens. A cold compress will be applied to the area if required and, if possible, we will then continue with the examination.

Sometimes you may need another injection of contrast and, if necessary, this will be discussed with you. A consultant will examine you before you leave the department. The care you receive will be fully documented on the breast radiology information system.

## **Is there anything I can do when I get home?**

- Massage the area where the contrast has gone into the tissue.
- If there is swelling:
  - Elevate the affected arm as much as possible. At night, keep it elevated on two pillows (you should continue to do this until the swelling has gone down).
  - Use an icepack or a bag of frozen vegetables wrapped in a clean towel over the site. Never place ice directly on the skin as it may cause frostbite. Do not leave it on for more than 15 minutes at a time.
  - If the area is painful, take over-the-counter painkillers.

## **Is there anything I need to look out for?**

In most cases this is a minor injury and does not require any treatment. However, in a small number of cases where the injury is more severe, you will need to seek medical attention from your GP or your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

## **Important Information**

If you experience any of the following symptoms you should seek advice from your GP or attend your nearest Emergency Department (A&E) and take this leaflet with you:

- The pain becomes more severe and is not controlled by over-the-counter painkillers.
- There is increased swelling of the arm or hand.
- The arm or hand changes colour.
- There are pins and needles or altered sensation in the arm or hand.
- There is blistering or ulceration of the skin around the injection site.

## **How do I contact the Breast Unit?**

If you have any questions or concerns about your Contrast Enhanced Spectral Mammography (CESM) please contact the Breast unit at York Hospital.

Telephone 01904 725590 or 01904 725591,  
Monday – Friday, 8:30am – 5:00pm.

If you need advice outside these hours, please contact NHS 111 (24 hours) - the NHS non-emergency number.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact the Breast Unit at York Hospital on 01904 725590 or 01904 725591.

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net).

An answer phone is available out of hours.



# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:

[www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/](http://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/)

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