

# INTRAVENOUS CHEMOTHERAPY

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## ■ Important information for you

Chemotherapy is often administered intravenously. In such cases it is injected directly into the veins. This requires attaching a flexible catheter (changed frequently) to your forearm. This device is known as a peripheral line, since it is placed on a limb.

It is sometimes necessary to resort to a larger vein found under the collarbone (subclavian) or at the base of the neck (jugular) using a catheter that stays in place while you are in hospital. This long catheter is called a central line, since its tip is positioned at the entrance to the heart.

The implantable port is a central access device made to remain in situ for several years. It comprises housing implanted under the skin into which a needle is inserted when the device is in use. This method preserves the veins and avoids repeated needle sticks. It can be removed on the advice of the oncologist and the patient, and once the treatment and the monitoring follow-up is complete.

Chemotherapy may adversely affect the skin and the underlying tissue. When substances leak from the vein by accident, we speak of extravasation. In such a case, the medical team will begin immediate treatment to limit possible local lesions.

Careful monitoring of the perfusion is essential. You can help to ensure your own comfort and safety by following the advice and noting the signs mentioned below.



## INFO

Certain types of chemotherapy are available in the form of tablets to be swallowed. Their effectiveness and their side-effects are identical to those of other treatments.

## Some advice

- ▶ Move about as little as possible while the chemotherapy is being administered.
- ▶ Avoid pulling on the tubing so as not to displace the catheter or the needle.
- ▶ Protect the catheter dressing from splashes and do not dip it in water.

## Signs to be noted

- ▶ Pain, heat, prickling or a feeling of dampness around the vein during chemotherapy.
- ▶ Swelling of the skin, redness or discharge around the point of insertion of the IV.
- ▶ Feverishness, shivering, breathing difficulties.

**Tell the medical team immediately if any of these symptoms occur.**

Call the medical team also if

- ▶ The alarm on the device delivering the chemotherapy goes off.
- ▶ The dressing comes away or the tubing is accidentally pulled from the vein.



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## N. B.

Ligue Suisse contre le cancer brochure, *Les traitements médicamenteux des cancers* [Medicinal treatments for cancer]. Specific documentation on implantable venous access devices or ports is available on request. The medical staff in any of the HUG oncological departments can provide you with information.



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