

Having intraventricular chemotherapy under your scalp—information for children and adults

Information for patients
Cancer Services

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What is intraventricular chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy uses drugs to kill cancer cells. It can be given in different ways - these are called 'routes of administration'. This leaflet is about giving chemotherapy via an intraventricular reservoir (sometimes called an Ommaya reservoir). It is one way of giving chemotherapy drugs that need to reach the fluid in the brain and spinal cord (cerebrospinal fluid or CSF).

The usual way to give chemotherapy into the CSF is using a needle in the spine (intrathecal chemotherapy). However, for some people (for example if you have already had spinal surgery or if you have a brain tumour) **intraventricular chemotherapy** is a better option. This allows the chemotherapy drugs to be given directly into the CSF within the brain through an intraventricular reservoir.

Intraventricular chemotherapy is being offered as a treatment option more regularly now across the country. We are offering this at Leicester's Hospitals from September 2019.

What is an intraventricular reservoir ?

An intraventricular reservoir is a small plastic device that is placed under your scalp at the top of your head. You will need an operation under general anaesthetic (whilst you are asleep) to put the reservoir in and this will be done at Queens Medical Centre, Nottingham.

The reservoir is then used to deliver chemotherapy into the brain and spinal cord. The chemotherapy given to this area is to treat any cancer that has developed there or to prevent the spread of any cancer cells to that area. The reservoir can stay in as long as treatment is needed.

How is chemotherapy given into the intraventricular reservoir?

Chemotherapy can only be given by a doctor who has been trained to use an intraventricular reservoir. There is a register of doctors who are authorised to do this.

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or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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- We will shave the area (if needed) and put an anaesthetic cream on. This will be left on for between 30 and 60 minutes to numb the area.
- The area is then cleaned with antiseptic liquid.
- A needle is put into the reservoir and a small amount of fluid that surrounds your brain and spinal cord is removed and sent to the laboratory for testing.
- The chemotherapy is then injected slowly into the reservoir and is flushed with clean salt water (saline solution) before the needle is removed. Pressure is applied for a few minutes after taking out the needle and then a taped dressing is put on which can be removed the next day.
- You will need to stay with us for about an hour after the procedure.

What are the side effects of intraventricular chemotherapy?

Side effects are not very common when chemotherapy is administered via an intraventricular reservoir. However, you might experience:

- a headache for one or two days
- nausea (a feeling of sickness) or being sick
- a cold feeling when the chemotherapy is given

Intraventricular chemotherapy is generally very safe. However, there are possible risks which are listed below, although these are not very common:

- The reservoir might become infected. This can usually be treated with antibiotics but sometimes the reservoir has to be removed
- Bleeding from the site of the reservoir
- You may react badly to the chemotherapy drugs. Symptoms of this include: confusion; seizures (fits); weakness in your face, arms or legs; pins and needles/loss of sensation; slurred speech; or blurred eyesight. If these symptoms occur they usually get better on their own, but you need to ring us on one of the numbers below as we will need to assess you in hospital

If any of these symptoms occur or you notice headaches, neck stiffness, redness, tenderness or discharge (leakage) at the site of the intraventricular reservoir please contact us:

Children and young adults treated on ward 27 telephone:

- Ward 27 Day Care (Monday to Friday working hours) 0116 204 7801
- Ward 27 (outside of Day Care hours including overnight & weekends) 0116 258 5959

Adult patients treated in Osborne Building telephone:

- Emergency Helpline (24 hours 7 days a week) 0808 178 2212

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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

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