

# What to do when contrast dye leaks (Extravasation)

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**Patient Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(print)

## What is Extravasation?

Contrast dye is used to make parts of the body easier to see in many different diagnostic procedures. It is usually given by an intravenous (IV) tube into a vein in either the arm or hand. Occasionally, the contrast may leak out of the vein into the tissue under the skin. This is known as extravasation. When this happens, individuals can sometimes feel a stinging sensation where the injection has gone in, and the area may become swollen temporarily.

This is rarely a serious problem and there some things you can do to help speed up the recovery.

- Raise your arm above the level of the heart, as much as you can, until the swelling goes down.
- Apply a cold pack to the site for 10 to 15 minutes, remove for 5 minutes and repeat for up to 4 hours. Wrap cold pack in a towel. Do not place cold packs directly on skin.

Swelling or redness of the IV site can last for 1 to 2 days. It is also common to feel a dull ache at the site. The contrast will slowly be absorbed back into your circulation and be eliminated. Your arm should return to normal within 2 to 3 days. If this does not happen, you may be referred to a specialist.

## **Call your doctor or the Diagnostic Imaging Department if you notice any:**

1. Numbness or tingling of the hand or arm.
2. Increased swelling or pain that does not get better over time.
3. Arm or hand changes color.
4. Blisters at the site.
5. Coolness of the lower arm or hand.

The Diagnostic Imaging Department can be reached:

Monday to Friday  
8:00 am to 5:00 pm

905-521-2100

Ext. 46901 (Hamilton General Hospital)

Ext. 42245 (Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre)

Ext. 75263 (McMaster University Medical Centre)