

Information about Intrathecal Chemotherapy (page 1 of 2)

What is Intrathecal Chemotherapy ?

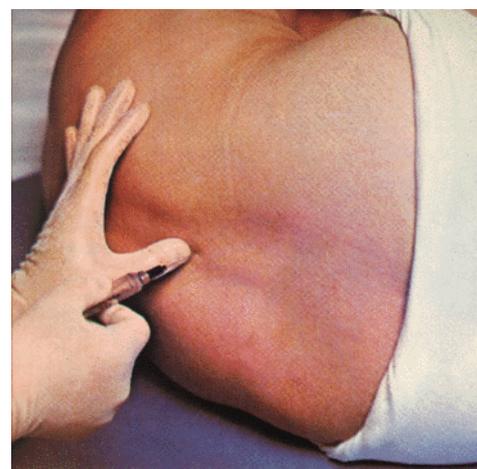
Intrathecal means the thin space between the lining of the spinal cord and brain. As part of your chemotherapy treatment you may need some Intrathecal Chemotherapy.

Some types of cancer can cause small amounts of cancer cells to spread to the fluid that is around the brain and spinal cord. This fluid is called cerebro-spinal fluid (CSF). The cancer cells in the fluid can start to affect the brain. To find out if there are any cancer cells in the fluid a sample is taken. Specialist doctors, called cytologists, look at this fluid to see if there are any cancer cells present. Intrathecal chemotherapy is given to reduce the chances of this happening or to get rid of any abnormal cells that are already in the CSF.

To get a sample of fluid a special test is done called a Lumbar Puncture.

What is a Lumbar Puncture?

A lumbar puncture is usually done by inserting a special needle into the lower part of the spine. You will be asked to lie on your side and curl up so that the back is as round as possible. This opens up the vertebrae and makes it easy for a needle to be put into the right place. Some doctors prefer to do the procedure with you sitting up & leaning forward onto a table instead.

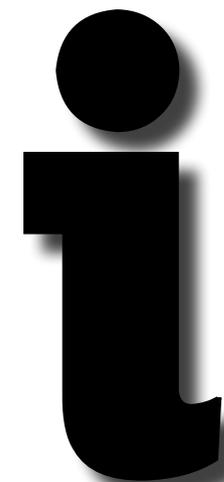


The area over the injection site is first cleaned with an antiseptic solution and a local anaesthetic is injected to numb the area. A very fine needle is then inserted between the vertebrae and into the spinal canal. It is important that you keep as still as possible at this stage.

It is a good idea to go to the toilet before the procedure begins as you will have to lie flat for a short while afterwards. You may experience a headache afterwards so it is advisable to make sure there are painkillers at home.

Intrathecal chemotherapy is also given by Lumbar Puncture. A specially trained doctor carries out the procedure. They will first remove a small amount of CSF and send it to the laboratory for testing. This will be

The Pembroke Suite
Tel: 01722 341930



If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: customer care@salisbury.nhs.uk

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

directly followed by the doctor injecting the chemotherapy.

Why is chemotherapy given this way?

When chemotherapy is given intravenously (through a vein) or orally (by mouth), the drugs are unable to get into the CSF and a more direct route is needed. To reach these cells a lumbar puncture is used to inject the chemotherapy into the CSF. More than one treatment may be needed.

How Chemotherapy is given by lumbar puncture

The doctor and nurse will check the drug together and will involve you in this checking process.

Once the needle is in the correct position, the chemotherapy is injected and the needle removed. A small dressing is placed over the injection site and you will be helped onto your back. The whole procedure will take about fifteen minutes.

After the Lumbar Puncture

You will be asked to remain lying flat for 30 minutes as this will help reduce the chances of you getting a headache, which can be a side-effect of the treatment. It helps to drink plenty of fluids afterwards to help reduce the chance of a headache developing. Tell the nurse if you do get a headache and you will be given some painkillers. You will be able to sit up after 30 minutes and we ask you stay for a further half an hour, before beginning to walk around. Once you are up and about you can continue with your normal life. However, you are strongly advised not to operate machinery or drive a vehicle for at least 24 hours. It is advisable that someone brings you to your appointment and takes you home afterwards.

Giving your consent

Before you have your lumbar puncture, the doctor will explain why you need the chemotherapy. You will be asked to confirm your name, date of birth and sometimes confirm your name on the drug label. This is to make sure that the right drug goes to the right person. If you feel unsure about the procedure or do not understand what is going to happen, tell the doctor and nurse. We will not proceed until you are comfortable with what we are about to do.

Intrathecal Chemotherapy and The Pembroke Suite

Intrathecal chemotherapy can only be given in special areas in a hospital. Staff giving this therapy must have had chemotherapy training. The Pembroke Unit holds a register of staff who have undergone extra training and assessment. This means that only staff that have been trained can be involved. These records are kept in Pharmacy, Pembroke Ward & Pembroke Suite and are available should you wish to see them.

We hope this leaflet has answered some of your questions. You may well have many more. If so, please speak to the doctor or nurse looking after you, who will be happy to answer any questions that you still have.

The Pembroke Suite
Tel: 01722 341930