

- The skin may become dry, blister and peel after a week or two.
- Growth of nails and hair on the treated limb usually stops for several weeks.

Occasionally, anti inflammatory medications will be prescribed if swelling and inflammation become problematic. Inflammation usually settles within 4 – 6 weeks.

What can I do to care for my arm/leg after the procedure?

- Your doctor will prescribe 1 aspirin tablet daily for 1 month.
- Shower normally using a mild soap and pat dry.
- When resting, elevate the limb (on a pillow on a chair or in bed) for a period of 2 weeks (or longer if swelling persists).
- DO NOT massage or apply firm bandages to the affected limb.
- When the skin becomes dry and scaly, apply either an aqueous or vitamin E cream until the skin appears healthy again.

Follow Up

You will be given an appointment to see a member of the surgical team 1–2 weeks after your procedure.

Occasionally side-effects can become more serious, so if you have any concerns about the way you feel, or the side-effects that you experience, please see your GP or contact your cancer nurse coordinator.

Useful contacts

Cancer Service Directory

The Cancer Service Directory lists cancer specific treatment facilities and services for metropolitan and rural patients.

www.healthnetworks.health.wa.gov.au/cancer/service/index.cfm

Cancer Council WA Helpline ph 13 11 20

Provides counselling, complementary therapies, support groups, financial assistance and lymphoedema management service

HealthDirect ph 1800 022 222

Provides guidance on what to do for patients in need of advice. Service available out of hours.

Useful Websites

www.melanoma.org.au/patients/treatment/33

www.cancerwa.asn.au

www.cancerbackup.org.uk

www.healthnetworks.health.wa.gov.au/cancer

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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Isolated Limb Infusion



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What is it?

Isolated limb infusion is a form of treatment sometimes offered to patients with recurrent melanoma that is confined to an arm or a leg. It can be offered when surgical removal of the recurrent disease is not possible.

The procedure allows an anticancer drug to be delivered directly into the affected limb without involving the rest of the body.

Isolated limb infusion was developed at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney in 1992, and over 300 procedures have been performed since then.

What does the procedure involve?

The procedure is done in two stages

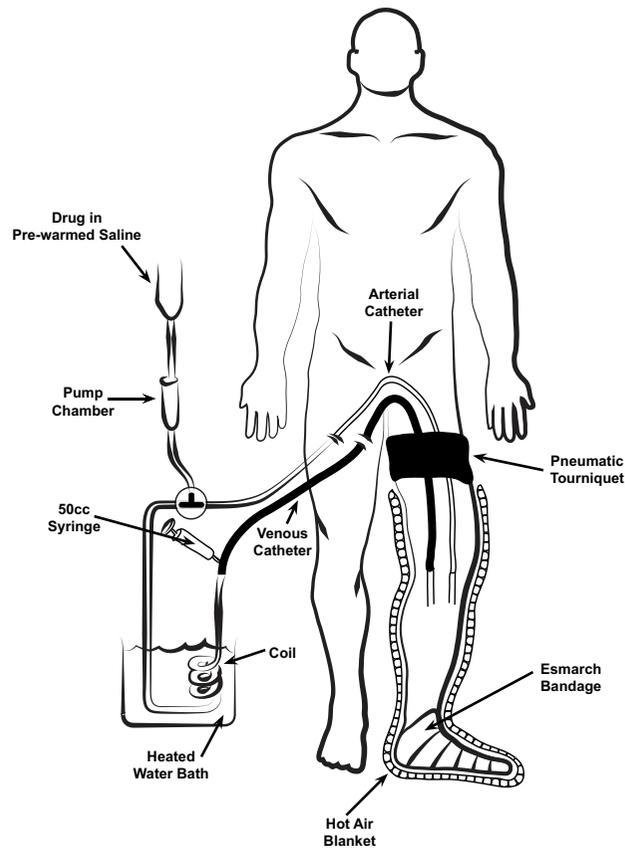
1. Radiology Department

To prepare for the isolated limb infusion, small catheters (flexible tubes) first need to be inserted through the skin into the artery and vein of the opposite limb. This is done using local anaesthetic and X-Ray equipment. These tubes are used to deliver the anticancer drug (melphalan) and to circulate the blood flow to the affected limb during the actual procedure.



2. Operating room

The second part of the procedure is performed under general anaesthetic later the same day. Although this takes place in an operating theatre no cuts or incisions are made. The procedure involves the “isolation” of the affected arm or leg from the rest of the body using a tourniquet to block off the normal blood supply. This ensures the anticancer drug is confined to the affected limb and not allowed to escape into the general circulation. The effectiveness of the anticancer drug is increased at raised temperatures, so during the procedure the blood circulating through the limb is warmed by passing it through a heating coil. The limb will be exposed to the anticancer drug for about 30 minutes.



When the procedure is completed, about 400 ml of blood (containing most of the anticancer drug) is removed from the limb and replaced with normal saline. This reduces the amount of drug left in the limb before the tourniquet and catheters are removed, and normal circulation is restored. The total procedure time in the operating theatre is about two hours.

What are the effects of the isolated limb infusion?

While this treatment aims to destroy cancer cells, normal tissue can also be affected. There are a number of expected side-effects associated with this procedure.

- If patients are particularly sensitive to the anticancer drugs they may initially experience mild nausea, but this can be easily managed with medication.
- It is common for the treated limb to become swollen, warm and pink for several days afterwards. Sometimes a sensation of pins and needles is also experienced.
- Occasionally there may be discomfort in the limb due to the inflammation of nerves, and this may last a few weeks.

