
Will I feel pain?

You may feel pressure or pain in the upper abdomen or in the area of your liver when the medicine is injected. You may also feel heat all over your body.

You will be given a pain medicine pump. By pressing a button, you will be able to give yourself the medicine you need to control pain.

You may notice tenderness for a few days in your upper abdomen after the treatment. This is normal and is caused by swelling in the liver. Pain medicine will control this tenderness.

Will I feel sick?

When the medicine is injected, you may feel like you want to vomit or you may briefly get the hiccups.

You may not feel hungry for a few days after the treatment. All of these symptoms can be managed by adjusting your medicine.

When can I go home?

The usual hospital stay is 6 days. Daily blood tests will show how your liver is working. When the liver is working as it should and you do not have a fever, you can go home.

What do I need to do after I leave the hospital?

When you leave, you may still feel some side effects. Medicine will be prescribed for you to take at home. To see how the liver responded to the treatment, you will be given a requisition to have 8 weekly blood tests. You can get these at a lab near your home.

A CT scan will be booked at the London Health Sciences Centre about 8 to 10 weeks after your treatment.

A follow-up appointment will be made at the London Regional Cancer Program about 2 weeks after your CT scan.

Comments, Feedback?

Contact Patient & Professional Education
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Hepatic Arterial Chemoembolization

For Patients with Hepatocellular Cancer



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London Regional Cancer Program

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What is hepatocellular cancer?

Hepatocellular cancer is a form of liver cancer.

How is this cancer treated?

Sometimes the tumours in the liver can be removed by surgery. They may also be treated by radiofrequency ablation (RFA). RFA is a treatment that uses radio waves to destroy liver tumours. It is done on a small number of patients in very select cases. RFA depends on the location, size and number of liver tumours.

Chemoembolization is one way to treat liver tumours. The goal of this treatment is to slow down or stop the growth of tumours in the liver.

Can an embolization cure the cancer?

An embolization does not cure the cancer.

It can be very effective in making the tumour smaller or stopping its growth. When either one happens, the symptoms from the cancer are then reduced or stopped.

Many people with hepatocellular cancer are able to return to work and do the activities they enjoy.

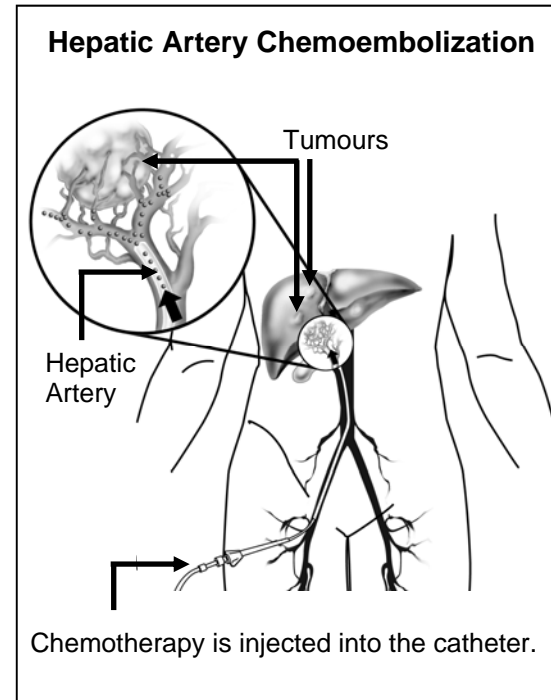
What medicine is used in an embolization?

A mixture of chemotherapy is injected into the artery that goes to the tumour(s). This mixture then kills the cancer cells.

How is an embolization done?

The following is a general description of the treatment. A nurse will give you more details when you are admitted to hospital.

- A Radiologist will take a special x-ray to find the arteries in the liver.
- A catheter (flexible tube) is inserted into the large artery in the groin, usually the right side.
- The catheter is moved into the hepatic artery and the arteries going to the tumour(s). This can take 30-60 minutes.
- When the catheter is in the right place, the Radiologist injects the chemotherapy mixture.
- After the injection, the catheter is removed and pressure is applied to the puncture site in the groin to prevent bleeding.



What will happen the day before the embolization?

You will be admitted to the hospital and blood tests will be done. A nurse will complete a history and review the medicines, vitamins, and minerals you are taking. Bring all your medicines, vitamins and minerals in their original packaging with you to the hospital.

In the evening, an intravenous (IV) will be started and you will be given IV fluid overnight. You may not eat solid food after midnight, but you may drink fluids. Your groins will be shaved by your nurse. If you prefer, you may do this on your own.

What will happen the morning of the embolization?

A catheter will be inserted into your bladder, because you will not be able to move or go to the bathroom during and for 5 to 6 hours after the treatment.

A second IV will be started for the pain medicine and an antibiotic. The antibiotic is to prevent infection and will continue for 4 days after the treatment is finished.

What do I need to do during the embolization?

You must lie very still. Wires will be taped to your chest and a blood pressure cuff will be put on your arm. This is to measure your heart activity and blood pressure during the procedure.

What will happen after the embolization?

You will go to the Recovery Room where you will be checked. After 2 hours, you will be brought back to your room. You must remain flat in bed with no leg bending for 5 hours or as ordered by the doctor.
