

What is a Tumor Embolization?

Embolization is a form of palliative (non-curative) treatment for cancer. This includes tumors originating in one area of the body or those that have spread (metastasized) to other areas of the body. The artery to the tumor is blocked off (embolized) with small particles to starve the tumor of oxygen and nutrients.

In certain circumstances, chemotherapy drugs are administered at the time of embolization or mixed with the particles to block the artery (chemoembolization). This allows a higher concentration of chemotherapy (compared with systemic chemotherapy) to be administered where it remains for up to one month within the tumor.

Following the embolization, you may experience significant abdominal pain that may start during the latter part of the procedure and usually lasts 2 or 3 days. This may also be associated with fever, nausea and vomiting, which is known as “post-embolization syndrome.” You will receive a script to control the pain and nausea, which can last up to 5 days depending upon the severity and duration of the post embolization syndrome.

During the procedure, you will lie flat on the examination table and IV sedation will be given through an IV to make you comfortable. A small catheter (tube) is inserted into the artery in either the right or left groin and guided to the part of the body to be treated or examined.

Once the catheter is placed, contrast (IV) dye is injected and images of the arteries are obtained. Small metal coils, plastic beads, or sponge like material (gelfoam) are deposited into the blood vessel through the catheter to stop the flow of blood.

The average length of the procedure is between 1-2 hours. At the completion of the examination, the catheter is removed and pressure is applied over the groin for 10-15 minutes to prevent bleeding. You will need to remain flat in bed for 4-6 hours following the procedure to prevent bleeding from the groin.

How do I prepare for the procedure?

No solid food after midnight the day before your procedure. Clear liquids are allowed the morning of the procedure unless told otherwise. This includes: water, tea, broth, popsicles, coffee without cream, 7-up, sprite, apple juice, or white cranberry juice.

You will need someone to drive you home. You will not be allowed to drive yourself home. If you do not have a ride home your procedure will be rescheduled. You cannot use public transportation.

Medication Instructions for all Interventional Procedures:

- You must be off your blood thinners for 5 days prior to procedure. These medications include aspirin, Plavix, Coumadin (Warfarin), and Pletal. If you are on any of these medicines, please inform the doctor that prescribed them before stopping them. Please notify west clinic nurse or doctor if they are not aware you are taking these medicines. If you have any questions regarding your meds, including if they are blood thinners, please call 901-922-6707.
- Take any additional routine medications the day of the procedure. If you are on insulin ask your doctor about any adjustments that may be needed.
- Your arrival time is 1 ½ hours prior to your procedure. We will need the additional time to do necessary lab tests, start an IV, ask pre-procedural questions and do a nursing assessment.

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