

Temporary shortage of IV contrast – impact on some cancer scans

Date: 26 May 2022

Global supplies of **contrast** have been affected by the current lockdown in Shanghai, China due to COVID-19. Contrast is the special dye that is injected into the body in some cancer scans including CT scans to help show a tumour's shape, size, and location and can also be used in planning for radiation therapy treatment. Contrast CT scans are considered the gold standard test for detecting many but not all cancers.

While the global shortage could affect hospital supplies over the next month or so, Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) expects contrast supply to return to normal by mid-June and other options are being explored.

There are alternative scans available for the management of cancer which your cancer care provider will discuss with you during this period to ensure your care will not be compromised. These may include MRI, ultrasound or PET scans.

Hospital cancer teams and imaging centres across the state are working together to ensure people are prioritised if alternative scans are not possible. Your treating team will discuss these options with you during this period.

If you are unable to speak with your treating team or have any questions about the contrast shortage and its impacts, call Cancer Council on 13 11 20.

What does the contrast shortage mean for me?

Your health care team will speak with you if you are required to have a different imaging scan to what you were expecting or may have been booked in for. You might be asked to attend a different imaging centre to where you usually have your scans.

Your scan might be delayed if it is not urgent or was planned as part of your routine follow up and you are feeling well.

If your scan is cancelled, you can ask to keep your planned follow up appointment so you can talk with

your treating team. You can also ask if your scan will be booked in for a later time. If this is not possible, ask for a contact number of someone you can call to understand the next steps for your treatment and care.

Will a different scan still be effective in picking up cancer?

Non-contrast CT scans are still very effective in detecting cancer, assessing the impacts of treatment or in planning your care. Other scans such as ultrasound, MRI or PET scans may be arranged as an alternative during this time, depending on your history and the type of cancer you have.

What if I am on a clinical trial?

You will still be able to remain on the trial. Your doctor or clinical trial nurse will notify you if your trial involves scans that use contrast and if non-contrast or other types of scans will be done instead. Any alternative scan they recommend will be just as effective and will not interfere with the results of your trial. If you have any questions or are worried, you can ask for a second opinion or call Cancer Council.

Will there be any additional costs if I need a different scan?

You should not incur any additional costs if you need to undergo a different scan, but you should check with the person making the booking if your scan is in a private clinic or it means you may have to travel long distances. Call your doctor's rooms if you have any concerns.

Where can I get support if I am worried?

Having scans can be a very anxious time and you might find it helpful to talk through your concerns. You can call your treating team or contact Cancer Council on 13 11 20 for information and support. We can also help you to liaise with your treating team if your scan was cancelled and you do not have, or may not have been informed of, an alternative plan.