

Transarterial Chemoembolization

Transarterial Chemoembolization is a minimally invasive technique used to treat cancers in the liver. Since tumors are supplied only by the arteries, and the rest of the normal liver receives most of its blood from the portal vein, selectively blocking the blood flow to the tumor can shrink the tumor, while allowing the liver tissue to survive. This technique delivers a high concentration of chemotherapy directly into the tumor, while depriving the tumor of its blood supply. TACE may be used in conjunction with other traditional therapies or alone, for patients who cannot go under resection or are waiting for a transplant. Chemoembolization is a palliative treatment to slow the growth of the tumor, however not a cure. Medical trials also show promising results with some metastatic tumors.

What Should I Expect During and After This Procedure?

Patients will be given intravenous sedation or general anesthesia. The interventional radiologist threads a tiny catheter from the femoral artery in the groin, into the blood vessels supplying the tumor. X-ray contrast is injected into the liver arteries, followed by a mixture of special oil contrast, tiny particles and chemotherapy medication. The oil and particles slow down the blood flow into the liver and prevent washout of the chemotherapy. This allows for a higher dose of chemotherapy delivery.

Afterwards, chemotherapy involves a hospital stay of two to four days. Patients typically have lower than normal energy levels for about a month following the procedure. The procedure is often repeated several months later.