

## What can I expect after IL-2 therapy?

Most patients are able to complete a cycle of IL-2 therapy within one week. You are advised to rest at home for an additional week after you leave the hospital. A follow-up visit will be scheduled for two weeks following the completion of your therapy.

Our multidisciplinary team is experienced in helping patients and their families cope with the physical and emotional effects of treatment.

## Additional treatment options

In addition to treating patients with IL-2, we offer novel biotherapy and vaccine treatments that use the body's natural defenses to treat cancer.

The Tumor Immunotherapy Program investigates the potential of tumor vaccines to treat the following types of cancer:

- Breast
- Early Melanoma
- Colon
- Metastatic Melanoma
- Kidney
- Pancreas
- Lung
- Prostate
- Lymphoma

Tumor vaccines stimulate the body's immune response to fight cancer.

Another type of cytokine therapy, interferon, is currently being used to treat patients with advanced melanoma and kidney cancer.

We are investigating the use of cancer vaccines in combination with IL-2, interferon, and chemotherapy.

## Contact information

To learn more about IL-2 therapy through the IL-2 Unit of the Tumor Immunotherapy Program at Columbia University Medical Center, please contact:

**Gail DeRaffele, RN**  
Clinical Coordinator  
212.342.0232

You can also visit our website at  
[www.tumorvaccines.com](http://www.tumorvaccines.com)

## Directions

The IL-2 Unit of the Tumor Immunotherapy Program is located at The NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center campus in the Milstein Hospital Building (177 Fort Washington Avenue).

## Parking

Valet parking is available at the Milstein entrance or you may park at the hospital lot on Fort Washington Avenue between 164th and 165th Streets.

## Public transportation

By subway, take the A, C, or #1 to 168th Street. By bus, take the M2, M3, M4, M5, M100, or BX7 to the hospital.

*For additional transportation information, please call 212.305.2500.*

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# IL-2 Unit of the Tumor Immunotherapy Program

for the treatment  
of melanoma & kidney cancer

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## About the IL-2 Unit

The IL-2 Unit treats patients using interleukin-2 (IL-2), an approved therapy for the treatment of malignant melanoma and kidney cancer.

The only academic, comprehensive, high-dose IL-2 center in New York City, our multidisciplinary unit consists of dedicated and specially-trained physicians, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, and nutritionists.

## What is IL-2?

IL-2 is a type of natural protein, called a cytokine, produced by the body. It stimulates the white blood cells known as T-lymphocytes (T-cells) to grow and divide. T-cells are an important part of the body's immune system. Giving IL-2 in high doses stimulates the patient's immune system to better recognize and destroy cancer cells.

High-dose IL-2 is an FDA-approved, inpatient therapy to treat *metastatic melanoma* (advanced skin cancer) and *metastatic renal cell carcinoma* (advanced kidney cancer). Metastatic disease refers to cancers that have spread beyond the original site to additional tissues and organs.

## What are the benefits of IL-2?

High-dose IL-2 has resulted in disease regression in 15% to 20% of patients with advanced melanoma and advanced kidney cancer. About 6% to 8% of these patients experience lasting or complete regression of all disease.

## What happens when I arrive at the hospital?

IL-2 is an inpatient therapy. On your first day, you will check in with Admitting on the first floor of the Milstein Hospital Building (177 Fort Washington Avenue). Once admitted, you will have blood drawn for routine tests and an electrocardiogram will be conducted. You will then receive your paperwork and be directed to the IL-2 Unit.

Upon your arrival, the floor clerk will show you to your room and introduce you to a nurse who will record your vital signs and conduct a brief medical interview. The nurse will also provide you with a small pouch to wear around your neck. This pouch contains a box that is connected by wires to adhesive patches on your chest. It enables the dedicated Telemetry Service to monitor your heart rate and rhythm at all times during your stay.

## How is IL-2 given?

Once you are settled into your room, one of the IL-2 Unit doctors will stop by to answer any questions and to discuss the placement of the Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC) line. The PICC line is a small, flexible tube inserted into a vein in your arm and threaded upwards towards your heart. The line is used to administer IL-2.

Two members of the PICC team—a dedicated unit of nurses trained to place PICC lines—will come to your room and insert the PICC. Once the PICC team has completed placing the line, your physician will be notified and you will be taken to the third floor of the hospital for a chest X-ray.

The doctors will review the chest X-ray to ensure that your PICC line is correctly positioned. Once the PICC placement is approved, you will begin to receive your IL-2 therapy.

## What are the side effects of IL-2 therapy?

IL-2 therapy can cause a number of side effects including: low blood pressure, fevers, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, infection, chills, swelling and weight gain, confusion, skin rashes, and changes in your liver and blood chemistries.

Fortunately, we can prevent and treat these side effects as they arise. The day before you are admitted to the hospital, you will begin taking three medications to help prepare your body and reduce your chance of developing fevers, chills, and nausea.

During the course of your hospital stay you will receive antibiotics to prevent you from acquiring any infections. If you experience low blood pressure, we will administer fluids or medications to raise your pressure and make you feel more comfortable. Medications are also available to reduce skin rashes and prevent itching.

## How many doses of IL-2 will I receive?

In general, you will receive as many doses of IL-2 as you can safely tolerate—up to a maximum of 15 doses over the period of your stay. Doses are given approximately every 8 hours and each dose takes around 15 minutes to administer.

A nurse will draw your blood every morning and the medical staff will evaluate your status throughout the day. During treatment other medications and fluids can be given through the PICC line.

You will receive 2 cycles of IL-2 therapy given 3 weeks apart. Each cycle consists of about 5-7 days of in-hospital treatment. A CT (computed tomography) scan is taken 4 weeks after the completion of the first course (2 cycles). If the scan shows a response to the therapy, your physician may recommend that you come back for additional courses.