



SIR-Spheres[®] Microspheres

Targeted radiation treatment for inoperable liver tumors

SIR-Spheres microspheres are a safe and effective method of using highly targeted radiation to treat inoperable liver tumors that have metastasized from colorectal cancer. At roughly 32 microns across, these tiny beads are larger than a red blood cell but smaller than a liver cell, and they carry a radioactive material called yttrium-90 (also known as Y-90). When released into the bloodstream that feeds the liver, they become lodged in the tumor's vasculature and kill cancer cells by delivering up to 40 times more radiation than would be possible using conventional radiation therapy—without affecting the surrounding healthy tissue.

AT A GLANCE

- SIR-Spheres microspheres are offered at more than 600 medical centers worldwide and more than 400 in the U.S.
- Over 34,000 doses have been supplied to date.
- The treatment takes about 60-90 minutes, and after careful monitoring, most patients return home four to six hours afterward.
- The microspheres emit radiation for about two weeks.
- Reported side effects are few and relatively mild; most patients experience flu-like symptoms for one to three weeks.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who are candidates for this treatment?

Because most liver tumors cannot be surgically removed, microspheres therapy has emerged as a treatment option for patients whose colorectal cancer has spread to the liver, cannot be treated by surgery and/or has stopped responding to chemotherapy. In such cases, clinical studies have shown it to control the advancement of the disease, increase overall survival and help patients maintain a good quality of life. It can be used alone or in combination with chemotherapy.

Can SIR-Spheres® microspheres be used for other types of liver cancer?

This therapy is approved specifically for treatment of inoperable metastatic colorectal cancer that has spread to the liver. Ongoing research and peer-reviewed published papers suggest that Y-90 microspheres may also be effective in treating other forms of liver tumors. However, investigation is still underway.

How is the procedure performed?

This outpatient procedure is performed at a hospital by a highly trained interventional radiologist who uses a transfemoral microcatheter (that is, a very thin tube threaded into an artery in the thigh) to release millions of these tiny beads at the tumor site. The treatment normally takes about 60–90 minutes, and after careful monitoring most patients return home four to six hours after the procedure is complete.

What are the potential complications?

In rare instances, a small number of microspheres may reach other organs in the body, such as the gall bladder, stomach, intestine or pancreas. In this case, they may cause inflammation and require additional medical attention.

Does insurance cover the procedure?

Medicare, for the most part, reimburses hospitals for the cost of outpatient treatment with SIR-Spheres microspheres. Many private payers have realized its efficacy, and as a result, have issued positive coverage policies for treatment. A few of these payers include Aetna, Anthem, Cigna, Healthnet, Humana, United Healthcare, Wellpoint and many independent Blue Cross/Blue Shield plans, as well as other smaller plans on a case by case basis.

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Take the Next Step

To determine whether your patient is a candidate for SIR-Spheres Microspheres, or for a referral to an Interventional Radiologist, call Mercy Imaging Center at **916.863.2804**.