

# Information for Patients: Port-A-Cath/Implanted Venous Access Device

## What is a Port-A-Cath/Implanted Venous Access Device (IVAD)?

A Port-A-Cath/IVAD is a small device placed beneath the skin, usually in the chest or the arm. A port has a self-sealing rubber top called a septum.

The port connects to a small, soft tube called a catheter. The catheter is placed inside one of the large central veins that takes blood to your heart.

Once the port is in place, it can be used to give IV fluids, medications, chemotherapy, blood products, and nutrition and to take blood samples.

## How is a port implanted and what can I expect during the procedure?

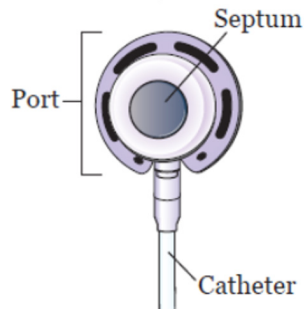
Implanting a port involves a brief surgical procedure in the Interventional Radiology Department. You will stay awake while the port is put in. The procedure takes about 30 to 45 minutes.

A local anesthetic (freezing) is injected into the area the port will be inserted to numb the skin. You should only feel a little pain or discomfort during the procedure.

Once the port is placed, the port will be accessed with a needle to make sure it is working. The needle may be left in place if you require treatment within 24-48 hrs.

An x-ray will be taken to make sure the port and catheter are in the right place.

The incision where the port was placed will be sutured closed. The sutures are dissolvable and won't need to be removed.



A sterile dressing and gauze will be applied. The dressing will need to be changed within 24 hours to avoid infection. Your cancer care team nurse will ensure arrangements are made to have the dressing changed. If you do not have an appointment by 12:00 noon the day after your procedure, call the cancer centre to ensure arrangements have been made.

Once the incision is healed, you will notice a small round or triangle-shaped bump under your skin where your port is.

## What should I do when I get home?

- Spend the rest of the day resting at home. You can eat or drink normally.
- You may feel sore and swollen around the area where the port was put in for a few days after the procedure. The area may also be bruised, which can take longer to go away.
- Avoid lifting anything heavier than 10 lbs for the first week after your port is placed.
- Do not get your bandages wet. You can shower once your bandages are removed.
- Do not peel off the Steri strips under the dressing. Allow them to fall off on their own.
- Check your bandage for bleeding. If the exit site bleeds, press firmly on the exit site over the dressing until bleeding stops.

## How is my port accessed?

To access your port, a special needle is inserted through your skin into the septum. The needle can stay in for up to seven days or it can come out each time an infusion or blood draw is finished. The port can be accessed with a needle many times without it weakening.

DO NOT let anyone who isn't trained appropriately access your port. Laboratory staff cannot take blood from your port.



## *Port-A-Cath/Implanted Venous Access Device*

### Identification of your port

At the time your port is implanted, you will receive a wallet identification card. You should have this card with you when you visit your hospital or clinic.

Some ports have the benefit of being able to be used for power injections, such as contrast dye, which is required for certain types of diagnostic imaging scans. Before having one of these scans, you will need to provide valid proof that you have a port that can be used for power injections.

### Caring for your port at home

When the port is accessed, a dressing will cover the needle and port site. This helps secure the needle and keep the area clean. The dressing should be kept clean and dry. Do not tilt or rock the needle once it is inserted.

Inspect the needle and port area regularly. If the port and/or needle seems to have moved, or you notice swelling, bruising, redness or tenderness, contact your cancer care team.

Your port requires minimal care between uses because it is completely under the skin. When the port is not accessed, no dressing is required and you can swim, shower or bathe as usual.

The port must be flushed with heparin to prevent blood clots from forming inside the catheter. It is recommended that the implanted port be flushed after each infusion and every four weeks when not in use.

DO NOT put any fluids or solutions in the port unless instructed by your cancer care team.

### How long can my port stay in place?

A port should last for the duration of your treatment, provided it is working well and shows no signs of infection. Ports may be left in place for many years, as long as recommended care and maintenance are followed.

### Are there activities I shouldn't do after my port is implanted?

Once your incision heals, you can return to normal daily activities, such as household tasks, job responsibilities and exercise.

Avoid playing any contact sports.

Your port will not set off metal detectors.

Always call your cancer care team if you have any questions, problems, or notice any changes in the appearance of the area around the port site.

### Call your cancer care team or go to the nearest emergency department if you have:

- Fever 38.0 C or higher, with or without chills
- Sudden pain in your chest, especially when you are getting medication through the port
- Pain, swelling, redness or fluid around your incision
- Swelling of the neck, face or arm on the side where the port is inserted

### Contact Information:

- Allan Blair Cancer Centre  
4101 Dewdney Avenue, Regina  
Phone: 306-766-2213
- Saskatoon Cancer Centre  
20 Campus Drive  
Phone: 306-655-2662
- Regina Primary Health Care Treatment Centre  
1311 Broadway Avenue  
Phone: 306-766-0370  
Open 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, 7 days a week  
including statutory holidays