

PORTACATH

Overview

Depending upon the type of treatment you will be receiving, your physician may suggest that you have a portacath surgically inserted. This implantable venous access system enables your care team to administer medications or other fluids directly into your blood stream with a simple, virtually painless injection rather than the traditional IV. Using this technique helps protect your veins and is less painful, as it results in fewer and smaller needle sticks. It also can help prevent certain complications with powerful chemotherapy drugs.



Patients receive ports during a brief surgical procedure. The port is completely under the skin in a convenient, but inconspicuous place on your chest or arm. It consists of a small chamber called a port with a tube (or catheter) that leads to a major vein. Once the incision heals, you will only notice a small bump.

When it is time for you to have medication, your health care provider will access your port with a specially designed needle that will deliver the medication or fluid through the needle into the portal chamber and through the catheter directly into the bloodstream. The medications are administered into the system using a syringe, or through IV tubing attached to a medication bag or infusion pump. Your port will also be used for routine blood work.

Care Instructions

Your portacath must be flushed in order for it to work properly. While you are on treatment, your portacath will be flushed after each treatment. However, when you are no longer on treatment, you must remember to have your portacath flushed regularly.

Flushing your portacath requires placing a needle in your port and flushing it out with heparin. Heparin is a blood thinner that sits in your catheter and prevents it from becoming occluded.

It is your responsibility to make the appointment to have your portacath flushed. This procedure needs to be done every 4-6 weeks and can go as long as 8 weeks if necessary.

Together, you and your physician will determine when to remove the portacath.