Getting your port placed

- Your doctor will refer you to a physician who specializes in port placement.
- Insertion of a port is placed during a minor surgical procedure that typically doesn’t require general anesthesia. This can be done as an outpatient procedure.
- The port is placed just below your skin, and is connected to a small flexible tube called a catheter that is inserted directly into a blood vessel.
- Use of an implanted port carries risks associated with a minor surgical procedure and vascular access. Potential complications include: internal bleeding, nerve damage, collapsed lung, fluid build up around the lungs, blood clot formation, and accidental cutting or puncturing of blood vessels.

When fighting cancer, it helps to know you’re not in it alone.

Cancer is a disease that touches many lives, and learning from each other makes us all stronger. That’s why we created the VEINS FOR LIFE* awareness program. The VEINS FOR LIFE* awareness program is for and about educating chemotherapy patients and their families about implanted port usage and other intravenous (I.V.) chemotherapy delivery options.

With the help of patients who have gone through chemotherapy, as well as input from medical experts, the VEINS FOR LIFE* awareness program will help you take an active role in decisions regarding the way you receive your chemotherapy.

Choosing a method of chemotherapy delivery is an important decision for you and your doctor. That's because the decisions you and your doctor or nurse make today go far beyond chemotherapy—it may help to positively impact your lifestyle and comfort during chemotherapy delivery, as well as the long-term health of the peripheral veins in your hands and arms. Depending on your treatment regimen, you have the option to choose a chemotherapy delivery method that fits your lifestyle. Ports, compared to other central venous access devices, are more likely to permit you to go about your normal day-to-day activities, like showering, swimming, jogging and playing with your children. Ask your doctor or nurse about specific activities and the appropriate time to resume them.

What every chemotherapy patient should know about ports

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If you are thinking about getting a port, you probably have questions about how other methods of administering chemotherapy.

What are the advantages to having a port?

Implanted ports have many advantages over other methods of administering chemotherapy.2

- **Lifestyle.** Implanted ports, compared to other centrally placed vascular access devices, are more likely to permit you to go about your normal day-to-day activities, like showering, swimming, jogging, and playing with your children. Ask your doctor or nurse about specific activities and the appropriate time to resume them.

- **Comfort.** Once placed, a port can remain for as long your doctor determines you need it. While the port itself will still need to be accessed with a special needle, there will be a decreased need for the sometimes painful poking and prodding to find a peripheral vein in the arms or hands with an I.V. every time you receive chemotherapy or have your blood drawn.

- **Increased Privacy and Appearance.** Implanted ports are small and can be hidden from view. With an implanted port, there is no exposed device and, because ports are typically placed in the chest, there’s no potential for bruised arms. No one needs to know about your treatment unless you want them to.

- **Long-term Health.** Since ports are typically placed in the chest, port usage can reduce the likelihood of damage to the peripheral veins in your arm or hand. This may benefit a patient who needs blood work or I.V.s down the road.

A port is not for everyone—especially patients with a history of forming blood clots, who have had previous vascular access surgery, or who are not emotionally prepared to have an implanted medical device. Like any vascular access procedure, there is always a risk of complications, including venous blood clots, skin erosion, infection, a collapsed lung, or clotting of the port catheter. Talk to your physician or nurse about these and other risks, and whether a port or other treatments are right for you.

What is a port?

An implanted port (or port) is a small vascular access device (about the size of a quarter in diameter) with a hollow space inside that is sealed by a soft top. It is used to carry medications into the bloodstream and is placed in patients who need intermittent to long term I.V. therapy. The implanted port is connected to a small flexible tube called a catheter. A special needle is put in the soft top of the port so that medications and fluids can be given and blood samples withdrawn. In a minor surgical procedure, the port is implanted, which means it is placed completely beneath the skin, and the catheter is inserted inside a blood vessel.

An implanted port allows the doctor or nurse to deliver medications and fluids or withdraw blood samples without having to stick your arm veins directly with a needle. The implanted port allows the medications to be delivered directly into your heart to dilute and deliver the medication more quickly than if the medication was given in the veins in your arms or hands. An infusion or oncology nurse will use a special needle to deliver medication or take blood, and they may use an anesthetic cream to numb the skin to eliminate discomfort. The port may help to make these procedures more comfortable for you, especially if your treatment requires frequent access to the bloodstream for medication delivery or blood withdrawal. Some ports can also be used for CECT or CT scans.3

Why would I consider a port?

If you are receiving a treatment such as chemotherapy, it may involve frequent injections or infusions of medication and other fluids directly into the bloodstream. The treatment may also require that blood samples be withdrawn. An implanted port may help to decrease the discomfort of these procedures.

Frequent needle sticks and certain medication can damage the peripheral veins in your arm or hand, making access more difficult over time.4

Why would I not consider a port?

You should not consider a port if you:

- Have or are suspected of having an infection
- Have a history of forming blood clots
- Have a body size that will not allow for proper port placement or port access
- Have had the port insertion site exposed to radiation
- Are not emotionally prepared to have an implanted medical device

A port is not for everyone. Talk to your doctor or nurse about these and other risks, and whether a port or another vascular access device is right for you. For important patient safety information, please visit www.VEINS4LIFE.com.