

GETTING AN IMPLANTED PORT

What to Expect

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What is an Implanted Port?

An implanted port (also called a “port” or “port-a-cath”) is a type of central venous catheter. It is used to inject medicines, fluids, or other products directly into your vein as part of your treatment (called intravenous or IV therapy).

Why Do I Need a Port?

Your doctor or nurse may recommend a port for you if:

- you need IV therapy many times over 6 months or longer
- you have small veins and need multiple pokes to get an IV in
- your IV treatment must be given through a port

Your nurse can use your port to give:

- fluids
- medicines, like chemotherapy and antibiotics
- a blood transfusion
- IV nutrients (food) — this is called Parenteral Nutrition

Some implanted ports can also be used for high speed injection during CT scan or MRI test (special kind of x-ray). These ports are called “power-injectable ports”. Your nurse will let you know if you have a power-injectable port.

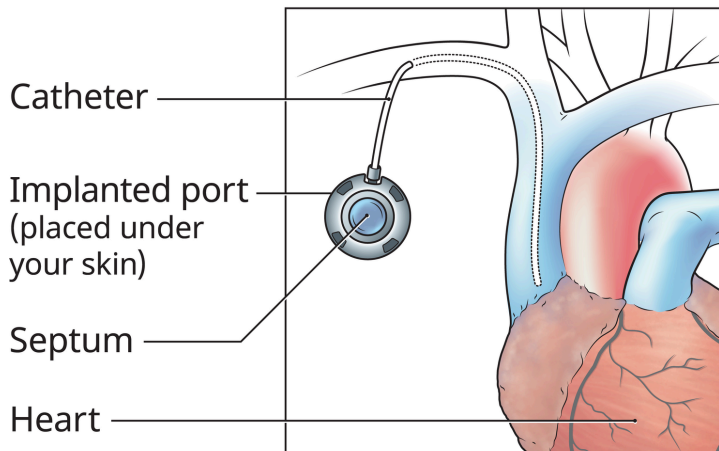
How Long Can I Have My Port?

Your port can stay in for the whole time you are on IV treatment, as long as it is working well and shows no signs of infection. Your doctor will request to have your port taken out when you don’t need it anymore.

Parts of the Port

Part 1 – The Port

The port is usually placed under your skin about 2 to 3 centimetres below your collar bone. You may feel a round or triangle shaped bump on your skin where the port is.



The middle part of the port (called “septum” or “access site”) is made of a self-sealing rubber that holds the port needle safely in place during treatment.

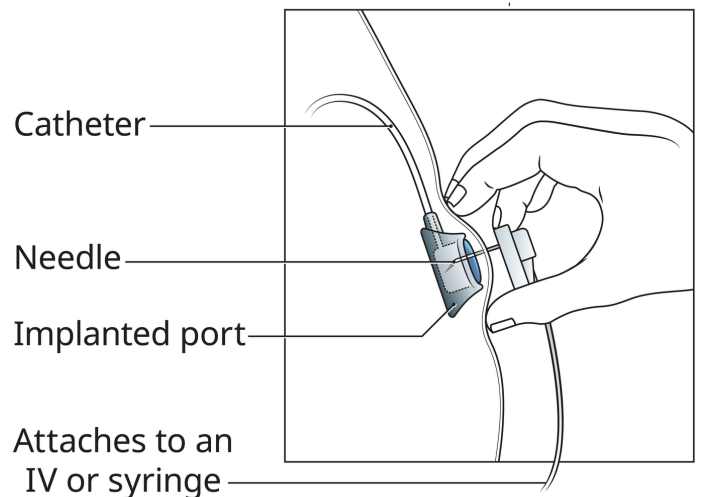
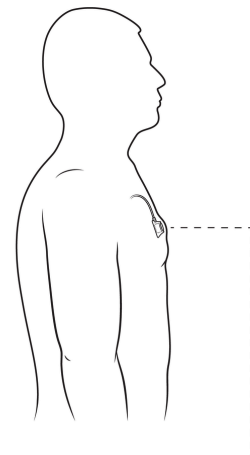
The catheter entering a large vein above the heart.

Part 2 – The Catheter

Your port is connected to a thin flexible tube called a catheter. The end of the catheter sits in a large blood vessel leading to your heart.

When your port needs to be used, your nurse will insert a special needle into the port septum. This is called “accessing the port”. This needle allows fluid or medicine to flow from your port through the catheter and into your bloodstream.

The port needle must be covered with a sterile dressing and must be changed every 7 days when in use. Your nurse will remove the port needle when your treatment is done.



Port-a-cath under the skin and an IV attaching to the implanted port.

How Can I Prepare for My Port?

- You will get a blood test done before the port is put in.
- **Do not eat and drink 4 hours before your procedure.**
 - You may have sips of water to take your regular medicine.
- Tell your doctor if you are taking any blood thinner medicine (such as Aspirin and Fragmin). Your doctor may tell you to hold this medicine before your port insertion. They will let you know when to start it again after the insertion.
- Shower before coming to your appointment.



It's not safe for you to drive home. Have a family, friend, or taxi drive you home.

What To Bring to the Hospital:

- Bring your health card
- Carry a list of all medicines you take regularly
- Leave anything of value at home such as jewelry
- If you have diabetes, bring your glucometer and a lunch/snack.

What Can I Expect During the Procedure?

- Your port will be inserted in the Interventional Radiology department in Medical Imaging.
- The medical imaging staff will ask you to change into a hospital gown.
- A medical imaging staff person explains the procedure to you and answers any questions you have. You are asked to sign a consent form before the procedure can start.
- You will be offered a medicine to help you relax for the procedure (like Ativan).

- You lie on a procedure table and stay awake while the port is put in. This usually takes about 30 to 45 minutes.
- A local anesthetic is injected into your chest area. This numbs the area where the port is inserted.
- The doctor will:
 - make 2 small incisions (cuts), one at the base of your neck and another on your chest about 2 to 3 centimetres below your collarbone.
 - insert the port into the opening on your chest.
 - access the port with a port needle to make sure the port is working properly. The needle is left in place if you need treatment within the next 24 hours. Otherwise, the port will not be used for 1 week while it heals.
- Dissolvable stitches and steri-strips (white tape) are used to help heal your incision. To prevent infection your incisions are covered with a clear dressing. The dressing needs to be changed the next day.
- You will then go to a recovery room to be monitored by the healthcare team.

After Your Port is Inserted

Within the First 24 Hours

- You can eat and drink normally.
- Go about your daily activities.
- Check your bandage for bleeding. **If the bleeding doesn't stop after you press on it for more than 15 minutes, contact your healthcare team, CareChart Digital Health, or go to the nearest emergency department.**
- You may feel sore and swollen around the area where the port was put in and the neck area. The soreness may last for 1 or 2 days after the procedure. The area may also be bruised, which can take longer to go away.
- Avoid putting pressure on the incision areas, such as wearing suspenders or a tight bra for the first 1 or 2 days.

General Care After Your Procedure

- You need to keep the area dry until the community nurse tells you it's healed. Often this takes up to 10 days.
- Avoid lifting anything heavier than 4.5 kilograms (10 pounds) and doing vigorous exercise (like running or aerobics) for the **first week** after your port is put in place. You can return to your normal activities once your incision is healed (often this takes about 1 week).
- If you are having treatment the next day, your dressing will be changed in the chemosuite.
- If you are **not** having treatment the next day, your dressing will be changed by a community nurse.
- Once the incision site dries, you don't need to cover the area when you shower or when the port is not being used (when there is no needle in your port). Let the water run over the incision but do not scrub it. The stitches on the incision site will dissolve on their own.
- Do not peel the steri-strips under the dressing. They should fall off on their own.

What Else Should I Know About My Port?

- Your port will stay in place as long as you need it.
- Your port does not affect CT scans, x-rays or MRI tests. If you need one of these tests, it is safe to have it.
- Your port must be flushed (cleaned) after each use and once every month when it is not in use. This timing is subject to change based on the organization providing care.
 - Flushing the port keeps the port clear of blood and medicine.
- After all your treatment is complete, ask your doctor when your implanted port can be taken out.

When Will My Port Be Taken Out?

Your port will be taken out once you no longer need it for treatments. It is taken out in Interventional Radiology. The port may also be taken out if you get an infection or if it is not working.

Once the port is out, a dressing will be put on to cover the site. The nurse will tell you when to take off the dressing, and when you can shower.

Want to Learn More?

Watch a video about port insertion from University Health Network (UHN) Patient Education.



When to Contact Your Healthcare Team

When to Call Your Doctor or go to the Emergency Department

- Fever of 38 °C (100.4 °F) or higher, with or without chills
- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath, with or without dizziness
- Sudden pain in your chest, especially when you are getting medicine through the port
- Pain, swelling, redness, or drainage (fluid) around your incision (cut)
- Swelling of the neck, face, or arm on the side where the port is inserted

For Questions About Your Port

Your homecare team (Ontario Health atHome) should be able to answer most questions about your port. Contact your homecare coordinator directly.

If you have questions about your cancer care, or side effects from your cancer/treatment, you can call your cancer healthcare team.

WRHN Cancer Centre call centre
8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday to Friday.
519-749-4380

If you need support outside of these hours you will need to contact CareChart Digital Health:

1-877-681-3057
www.carechart.ca

Adapted with permission from “What to expect when getting an implanted port” (2025), UHN Patient Education & Engagement. Use this resource for your information only. It does not replace medical advice from your doctor or other healthcare professionals.



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