

# Implanted Port Care

## What is an Implanted Port?

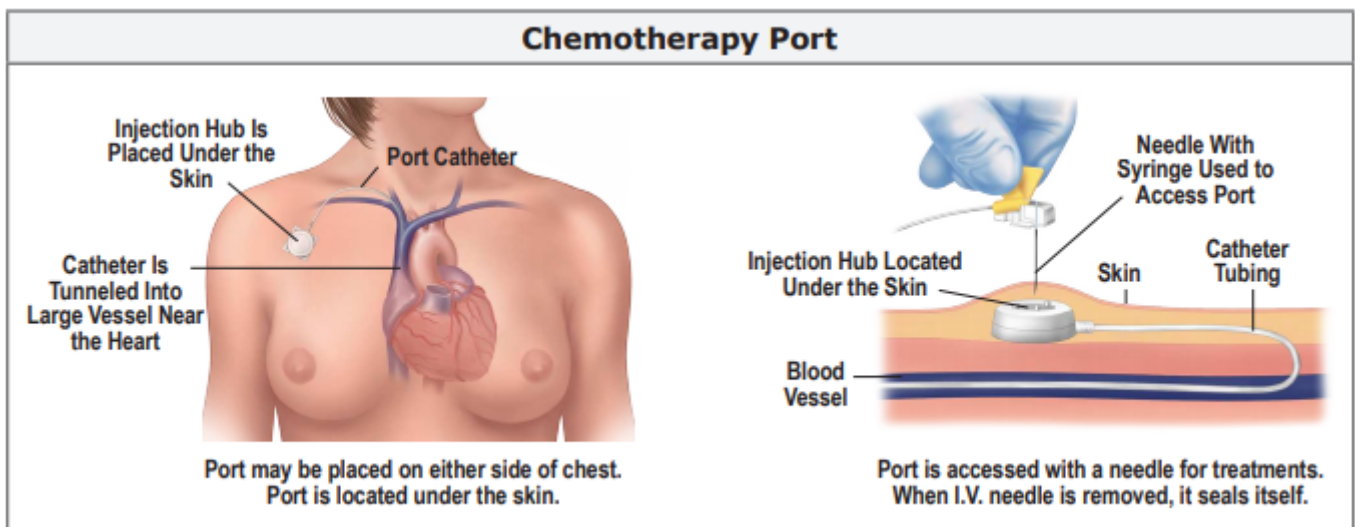
An implanted port is shaped like a disk. It is placed (implanted) under the skin during surgery. Ports can be used for giving IV (intravenous) medicines, fluids, food, or taking blood samples.

The most common place for a port is on your upper chest just below your collarbone. It can also be put in your arm, leg, or abdomen. Ports come in many shapes and sizes. Your doctor will choose the port and decide where to put it. He or she will look at your body size and what your port will be used for.

Your port can stay in as long as your doctor feels you need it. It is made from special materials, so it is safe for long-term use. If your port is not being used for a long time, the catheter is usually filled with a sterile mixture of saline and heparin.

## How is the Port Placed?

Your port will be put in during a short surgery in the operating room. It is usually done under local anesthesia. Local anesthesia numbs the part of the body being worked on. The surgeon will make a small cut into the area where the port will go. He or she will put the port just under your skin. A small flexible tube called a catheter is attached to the port. The tip of the catheter will be put into the large vein leading to your heart.



## How Does the Port Work?

Your port will look like a small, raised area under your skin. The center of the disk is raised. This is called the septum. Fluids are put into or taken out of the port using a special needle that goes into the septum. Most patients feel a mild pricking when the needle goes into their skin over the septum.

The catheter connects to the septum. The catheter takes the medicine or fluids right into the blood. Blood for lab tests can also be taken out through the catheter. When the needle is removed from the septum, no fluids or blood can leak out. The port can be used on the same day it is put in.

## Caring for Your Port

At first, your small incision will have adhesive strips (i.e. Steri-Strips™) on it or it will be covered with a small bandage. The adhesive strips stay in place until the incision heals. The incision should heal in about 5 to 7 days. After that, you do not have to wear a bandage except when the port is being used for a continuous infusion. A bandage will be used to keep the needle steady and protected while it is being used.



You will get directions and special training for your port. For the first 24 to 48 hours after surgery, the area around your incision will be tender and a little red. It is normal to have some bruising or mild swelling around the incision. You should call your doctor if this doesn't improve. You should also call your doctor if you have severe pain, a fever of 100.5 F or above, bleeding, or swelling.

After surgery, you will get a manufacturer's medical alert information card. This card has information about your port. You should carry it in your wallet in case you need medical treatment from health care workers who don't know your medical history. You may want to think about buying a MedicAlert® bracelet or necklace. It would give information about your port to emergency health care workers.

## **How Will the Port Affect My Daily Activities?**

**Do** not do any tiring activities for the first few days after surgery. Make sure you understand and follow any special instructions that your doctor or nurse give you. When your incision is healed, you may go back to normal activities. Check with your doctor or nurse about specific activities such as jogging, swimming, and tennis.

## **Can I Bathe or Shower?**

You may shower immediately after surgery if you have a clear plastic waterproof dressing. **DO NOT** submerge in a bath, hot tub or swim in a pool or beach for 2 weeks after surgery.

## **Are There Some Types of Clothes That I Should Avoid?**

This will depend on the location of your port. For example, if your port is in your upper chest, you may have to stay away from some types of bra straps or suspenders. Ask your nurse if you have a question about an item of clothing.

## **Who Pays for the Port?**

You should check with your insurance company. Most insurance policies will pay for the port.

## **Will the Port Set Off Security Alarms?**

The port does not usually set off security alarms. If it does, you can show your medical alert information card.

## **How is the Port Removed?**

The port can sometimes be removed at the time of breast cancer surgery. It can also be removed as an in-office procedure when adjuvant chemotherapy is completed.

## **When to Call Your Doctor**

Once your incision is healed, call your doctor if you have any:

- Redness
- Swelling
- Drainage
- Fever
- Pain
- Dizziness

You can also call your doctor or nurse if you have any other problems with your port.