

Getting Ready to Learn about a Port-A-Cath (Port)

Learning something new can be hard. It is even harder if you are not feeling well. The purpose of this education plan is for you and the staff to review the following information together. Here are some good things to tell the staff:

- Who you want to learn with you. We would like to have someone who will be helping you at home learn with you.
- The best way for you to learn. Do you learn best by reading a book or pamphlet or by doing things yourself?
- If you are not feeling well, if you are in pain or you cannot focus on learning right now.

This information is important to your health. We may explain something more than once. We will be giving you information in small bits over several days.

What I need to Learn about Ports

By the time I leave the hospital; I will be able to tell the staff:

- What a port is
- How a port works
- General care instructions about my port
- What to do if I think something is wrong with my port

The staff will use three questions and answers to teach me about my port:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is this important to me?

The staff will ask me to repeat back important points in my own words, or ask me to show them what I have learned. They want to make sure that I know about my port and what to do if I have problems.

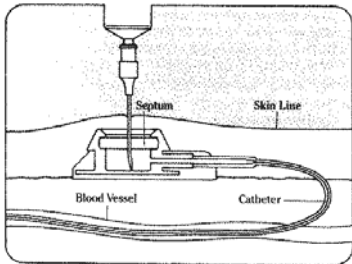
What is my main problem?

I need to know what a port is, understand how to care for my port, and how to watch for complications at home.

What do I need to do?

- ❑ Understand what a port is
 - A port is a device that is used to give medicine into the blood. The port is placed under the skin in the operating room. The port will be seen only as a small raised area under my skin. Daily care is not needed (unless the port is being used daily). The port does not affect my normal activities.
 - A port has two basic parts:
 - The port – a small metal or plastic chamber that is sealed at the top by a rubber disc and made to be used over and over.

A thin tube or catheter – one end is placed into the vein inside my body and the other end is attached to the port



- ❑ Understand how a port works
 - Medicines or IV fluids are given through the port using a needle. The needle is put through the skin and into the port. If the needle poke feels uncomfortable, my doctor may prescribe something to apply over the port. This is used about an hour before the needle is placed into the port. This helps to numb the skin over the port.
 - Once the medicine or IV fluids are done, the port will be flushed with heparin to keep the port open.

- Understand general care instructions about my port
 - During the first few days after my port is placed I should avoid heavy exertion. I should follow any special instructions from my doctor.
 - I can go back to my normal activities when the incision is healed.
 - When the needle is taken out, I will not need a bandage over the port because there is no opening in the skin.
 - If the port is no longer used every month, I should call my doctor to make plans to have it flushed with heparin.

- Know what to do if I think something is wrong with my port
 - I may have some redness and tenderness after my port is placed. This should go away in 1-3 days. Call my doctor if I see any unusual changes in the skin over my port. This could be swelling, redness, or soreness. Tell him if I have fever or chills. This could be a sign of an infection.
 - Call my doctor right away if I have pain or swelling in my chest, neck or arm. This could mean I have a blood clot in the vein where the port is placed.

Why is this important to me?

- To keep port complications from happening
- To know what to do if I have a complication

If I have questions about my port when I get home I can call the Bronson Vascular Access Specialist Team (VAST):

Office: 269-341-7573
Digital Pager: 269-513-3368 (enter your phone number)
Hospital Operator: 269-341-7654 (ask to have VAST paged)