Chest Port Insertion – A guide for patients

Why do I need an implantable port?

Your doctor has determined that as part of your treatment, you will need to receive your medications by intravenous (IV) injection. Since you may need frequent intravenous (IV) medicines or blood draws, it has been recommended that you have a “port” placed. Implanted ports are used for long-term venous access.

What is a “port”?

An implantable port is a special device that allows an easy and reliable way to give medicine into the veins and take blood samples from the veins. It is implanted under the chest skin. It consists of a small hollow chamber (the port), is about a half inch thick and about the size of a quarter. You can feel its raised center under your skin. The flexible catheter is securely connected to the port, which is tunneled under the skin where it enters a vein. The center of the port is made of a tough, self-sealing, rubber-like material that can be punctured through the chest skin with a special needle many times (septum). Each time it will reseal instantly.

How is the “Port inserted?”

Before the procedure, labs will be drawn and an intravenous line (IV) will be placed in your arm. The IV will be used to give you an antibiotic, a sedative (medicine to help you relax), and pain medicine.

In the radiology suite, the technologist will use Ultrasound to locate a large vein in your neck for access. Your upper right or left chest will be washed with a special soap to reduce the risk of infection. Your chest, neck and head will be covered with a sterile drape. The drape is made into a tent so that it does not lie on your face.
Once you are ready for the procedure, the nurse will begin to give you the sedative and pain medicine through your IV. The radiologist will also inject a local numbing medicine under the skin. This burns for a few seconds but then the skin will be numb.

The radiologist will insert a small tube into the vein in your neck. Then, a small incision is made on your chest to create a pocket about 2-3 inches below your collarbone. The port will fit into the pocket. After that, the tubing that is connected to the port is tunneled under the chest skin so that it enters the neck vein. All of this is done under the guidance of fluoroscopy (real time x-ray seen on a TV screen).

Once everything is in place, the port and neck access will be closed with stitches. The chest incision may also include steri-strips (special tape).

The procedure will take approximately 1hr once in the radiology suite.

**Will my port cause any pain?**

You may feel some soreness for a day or two after your port is inserted. This is normal. Once healed, there should be minimal pain associated with the device.

**Can my port be used immediately?**

It is preferred to let the incisions adhere for 3 days before accessing it. If access is needed before that (ie. chemo treatment) the radiologist can leave access for the nurse or doctor to give your treatment.