



South Eastern Health
and Social Care Trust

Department of Radiology

Insertion of a Portacath

Patient Information

What is a Portacath?

An implanted port is a small medical device which is inserted beneath the skin and connected into a large vein.

Ports are often used to give medicines that need to go directly into a vein or fluids to patients who have weak or very narrow veins or to patients who require long-term treatment. Doctors recommend the use of ports for patients who regularly have chemotherapy or long-term antibiotics.

Benefits

A port can be left in situ for a long period of time, up to several years if necessary therefore it can be used throughout your treatment.

Risks

Serious risks and complications are very rare, however as with any procedure some risks or complications may occur.

- Infection
- Vessel injury
- Allergic reaction to either the medications or contrast media
- Damage to other structures.

Alternatives

There are other means of maintaining prolonged periods of venous access. Please discuss these options with your Doctor.

Preparation

If you take any medications to thin the blood, please contact your Consultant who wants you to have this examination as this medication must be stopped for a specific length of time before the procedure.

Fasting

You must not eat for six hours before the procedure; however you may drink clear fluids such as water until two hours before.

Within 2 hours of the procedure prescribed medications, especially pre-medication can be taken with a small drink of water (30ml).

Allergic reactions

Tell your consultant if you have any allergies or if you have had a reaction to any drugs or procedures in the past.

If you are a diabetic and need advice about fasting, please contact the hospital's Diabetic Advice team prior to admission on (028) 9056 1426.

Admission

A Portacath is usually carried out as a day case. During admission you will be asked about your medical history will be taken. A small plastic port (cannula) will be placed in a vein and blood samples will be taken. You will also be asked to change into a gown before transfer to the Department of Radiology.

The Procedure

The procedure takes approximately 1 hour. You will meet a number of staff who will look after you during the procedure. You must have a clear understanding of what the procedure involves including the risks and benefits. If you have not already done so, you will be asked to sign a consent form and the Radiologist will answer any questions you may have.

You will be transferred to the X-ray table and asked to lie on your back. The skin near the point of insertion in your chest will be cleaned with antiseptic solution and then numbed with an injection of local anaesthetic.

The Radiologist will make two cuts in the skin and a catheter will be inserted into a vein in your chest via one of these cuts. It will then be tunnelled under the skin to the second cut and the catheter is then connected to the port which is fitted into a space created under the skin.

An incision of approximately 4cm is made in skin on the front of the chest and a "pocket" is created under the skin for the port. More local anaesthetic will be administered to the side of the neck, then using ultrasound guidance, access is gained to the vein in the neck and a small plastic tube (catheter) is inserted.

A small tunnel is made in the skin for the tube to pass through and the other end is connected to the port. Correct positioning of the catheter is confirmed using X-rays (fluoroscopy). Dissolvable sutures (stitches) will be used and the insertions covered by two small sterile dressings.

Recovery

After the procedure you will be transferred to the ward and nursing staff will carry out routine observations. You must remain in bed until you have recovered. Please avoid strenuous activity for 10-14 days following discharge.

Care of your Portacath

Once the skin has healed the port requires very little maintenance however trauma to the area should be avoided.

The dressing care and usage of the port will be arranged by your consultant.

Contact details

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