

Your Child's Port at Starship



Port

What is a port (Implantable Venous Access Device)?

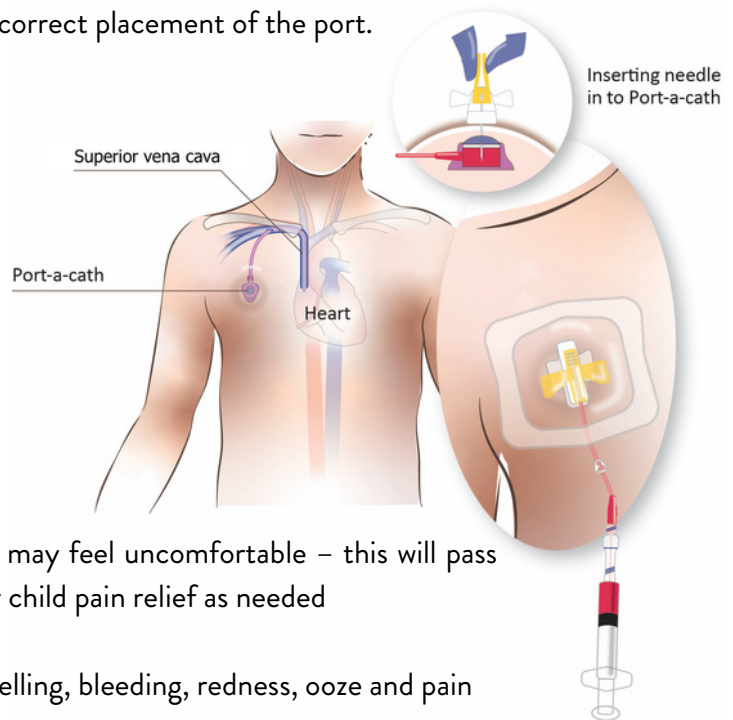
A portacath (port) is a type of central venous access device that sits completely underneath the skin. It has two main parts – the access chamber and a thin tube called a catheter. The access chamber sits within a solid case made of either titanium or plastic and the catheter goes from the chamber into a vein in the neck until it reaches the right side of the heart. A port allows easy access to your child's bloodstream.

How is a port inserted?

A port is inserted under general anaesthesia in the operating room. There are two small cuts made – one on the upper or side chest where the port sits and one on the neck. Sometimes, the port may be placed in another area. Once the port is inserted, x-ray is done to check correct placement of the port.

Why does my child need a port?

A port is useful when long-term IV treatment is needed and it can stay in for months to years if working well.



Following surgery

- The area where the port has been implanted may feel uncomfortable – this will pass after some time and your nurse can give your child pain relief as needed
- The port can be used immediately if required
- The insertion site should be monitored for swelling, bleeding, redness, ooze and pain

How is the port accessed?

- The port can be felt for under the skin and is accessed using a special needle
- The needle goes through the skin into the silicone pad of the port and is secured with a see-through dressing
- Numbing cream may be applied to skin before port access – your nurse can discuss these options with you

Changes in your child's activity

- Your doctor will let you know when your child can go back to doing normal activities like school or day care
- When the port is accessed with the needle it must be kept dry and out of water
- Contact sport should be avoided – please seek further advice from your doctor

Care and Maintenance

- The port needle and dressing needs to be changed every 7 days when in use
- If the dressing becomes wet, dirty or loose the dressing should be replaced
- When the port is not being used it will be 'hep-locked' and the needle will be removed. Hep-locking is when a medicine called heparinised saline is placed in the catheter to prevent blood from clotting in the catheter
- Once a month the port will be accessed by your nurse to check the catheter is working well. The port is then hep-locked and the needle is removed

Potential Complications

- When accessed, the port needle may come out and need to be re-accessed
- Blockage due to blood clots in the port - this may be fixed with anti-clotting medication. If the port remains blocked it may need to be removed
- Infection – monitor your child's temperature and check the port site for signs of swelling, redness or pain

When and how the port is removed

A port can stay in for months to years and is removed at the end of treatment or when it is no longer needed. Port removal is a surgical procedure, and your child will have this done in theatre with a general anaesthetic – your doctor will advise you on this when the time comes.



Please take your child's temperature each day

If your child's temperature is above 38°C, please notify the Homecare Nurse, Nurse Specialist, the ward or Starship Children's Emergency Department. Oncology patients to inform ward 27A/B or contact local shared care centre immediately.

Questions and Additional Notes

Contact Number(s)