

# Patient Education For Port-a-Cath or Port

## Why Do I Need A Port?

- A port eliminates the need find an arm vein every time you get your chemotherapy. This stops the prodding in your arm and risk of "blowing" your vein.
- Some types of chemotherapy are uncomfortable when injected into a vein so the port avoids this discomfort.
- Some types of chemotherapy can only be given through a port because they are dangerous to give through a vein.

## What Is A Port?

- A port is a small device that is surgically placed under the skin, usually in the upper chest area.
- It has two basic parts: a round basin and a small tube like catheter.
  - The basin is the area that you can sometimes see under the skin like a small bump about the size of a quarter.
  - The catheter is a tube that is connected to the basin and ends in a large vein in the chest.

## How Is A Port Placed?

- Through an outpatient surgery that lasts about an hour.
- You lie on your back during the procedure.
- The port is placed under the skin usually between your collarbone and breast by a surgeon.
- The port is put in your chest under local anesthesia; this means you will not be put completely to sleep. The local anesthesia will numb your skin so that you will feel pressure but not sharp pain.

## What Do I Need to Do to Get Ready to Have My Port Placed?

- You need to let your doctor know what medications you are on. This is especially important if you are on blood thinners such as Aspirin, Coumadin, or Plavix.
- The night before your test, you cannot have anything to eat or drink after midnight.

## How Do I Care for My Port When Chemotherapy is Finished?

- You will need to have your port accessed and flushed by a nurse every 8 weeks to make sure it continues to work properly. Appointments will be made for port flushes once your chemotherapy is finished.

### Reference:

University of Washington Medical Center (2005). *Vascular access procedure*. Retrieved Oct 31, 2008, from