For us, cancer is personal

Care of your Implanted Port
What is an implanted port?
A portacath is an implanted venous access device for people who need frequent or continuous administration of chemotherapy. ‘Portacath’ or ‘port’ are generic terms that describe these types of devices. A small catheter (flexible tube) is inserted into a large vein near the collar bone (clavicle). The catheter is connected to the port (raised chamber or reservoir with a self-sealing silicone rubber membrane) which is placed underneath the skin of the chest. It can be easily felt and accessed with a needle by a nurse. Administration of chemotherapy/medications or collection of blood samples are easier and much less uncomfortable for you when you have a portacath.

Will there be any pain after the procedure?
Most people have no discomfort immediately after the procedure because the local anaesthetic is still working. As this wears off, you may feel some discomfort – this varies from person to person. The skin overlying the port will be swollen and tender but this should ease as the incision heals. If you are already on pain relief tablets this should be sufficient. If you are not taking any pain relief tablets already, then paracetamol will usually be sufficient; however, if this is not providing relief, then contact your doctor.

You may also find it helpful to use a cold pack to reduce any discomfort and swelling after the procedure.

Please contact your doctor if you are experiencing pain which is not relieved with the above measures.

What do I do about the dressing?
On the day of the procedure, the dressing that was placed over your chest should stay in place. It is best that you either take a bath or, if showering, cover the dressing with plastic or cling wrap and secure with tape so that the site remains clean and dry.

On the day after your procedure, you may have an appointment at the centre to have the dressing changed. This appointment is pre-booked with the insertion of your port – please check your appointment time. At this appointment the nurse will assess your wound and teach you how to care for your port.

If you have any concerns about your port, contact the centre.

What is under the dressing?
Above the collar bone there is a small wound that has a single stitch. This stitch needs to be removed one week after the procedure by either your local doctor, hospital or at the centre. On your chest there is a larger wound which is closed with stitches under the skin – these will dissolve over time.

Can anything go wrong? What do I have to watch out for?
Infection is the main concern immediately after the procedure. If you notice:

• increasing redness around the area
• pain not relieved by paracetamol
• discharge like pus
• temperature greater than 38 degrees

contact your doctor immediately.

If the port appears to be infected, you may be prescribed an antibiotic. In these circumstances, occasionally the port may need to be removed.

Bruising can occur after these procedures. It is most common if your blood counts are abnormal. If you notice any fresh bleeding apply:

• gentle pressure with your hand
• cold pack to the area (frozen peas work quite well).

Slight bleeding is normal. If you have concerns about the amount of bleeding, contact your doctor.
How do I care for my port?

**Dressing:** At your appointment the nurse will demonstrate to you how to change your dressing. After this appointment, you may shower normally and gently remove the dressing in the shower. Do not pull hard on the skin – you want to treat this area gently for the first week while the skin is healing. Any bits of dried blood may be cleaned off with the Chlorhexidine swab given to you by your nurse.

After two days you may re-cover the wound or leave uncovered, it is up to you. The edges of your wound should have healed after about 4-7 days. The nurses will assess the site regularly while you are having your treatment. If you have any concerns, the nurses will advise you on the care of your port.

**Infection:** Now that you have an implanted port, it is important to look after your port. Regularly assess the area for:

- redness
- swelling
- pain.

If you feel unwell and your temperature is higher than 38 degrees, you may have an infection.

If you experience any of the above problems, please contact your doctor at the centre on the after-hours paging number or follow your centre's after-hours arrangements.

**Flushing the port:** Your new port requires regular maintenance called ‘flushing.’ The port is accessed and a solution instilled which prevents the port from becoming obstructed. Your port needs to be flushed every eight weeks by a specially-trained nurse or doctor. You may be having treatment often enough that additional flushing is not required. If your treatment is infrequent, speak to your nurse about additional appointments.

**Activity:** Immediately following the insertion of your port, avoid strenuous activities. Once the incision line is healed, you can resume your normal activities, including swimming, as long as you do not have a needle in place.

If you have any queries, please discuss with the centre nurses.

**How long can the port remain implanted?**

In the absence of infection, your port can stay in place for the duration of your treatment.

If the port is no longer needed, both you and your doctor may decide to have the port removed. This takes place in the radiology department or hospital where the port was inserted.
## Icon Cancer Care locations

### Adelaide
First Floor, Tennyson Centre  
520 South Road  
Kurralta Park SA 5037  
P 08 8292 2333 | F 08 8292 2287

### South Brisbane
Level 5, Mater Medical Centre  
293 Vulture Street  
South Brisbane QLD 4101  
P 07 3737 4500 | F 07 3737 4701

### Townsville
9–13 Bayswater Road  
Hyde Park QLD 4812  
P 07 4795 7100 | F 07 4795 7101

### Chermside
Level 1, Chermside Medical Complex  
956 Gympie Road, Chermside QLD 4032  
P 07 3737 4500 | F 07 3737 4801

### Southport
Level 9, Premion Place, 39 White Street  
(Corner Queen and High Streets)  
Southport QLD 4215  
P 07 5657 6400 | F 07 5657 6401

### Wesley
Level 1, Wesley Medical Centre  
40 Chasely Street  
Auchenflower QLD 4066  
P 07 3737 4500 | F 07 3737 4601

This information was current at the time it was published and is intended as a guide only. It is not intended to replace information provided by your doctor or nurses. Each patient is an individual and responses may vary. If you have any questions, please talk to your doctor or clinic nurse.