



# Having a portacath

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**MARCELLE RUTH**  
CANCER CENTRE & SPECIALIST HOSPITAL

**The Marcelle Ruth Cancer Centre  
& Specialist Hospital is the first  
comprehensive healthcare centre of its  
kind in Nigeria and, indeed, West Africa.**

**> Our promise**

In everything we do, we believe that compassion and care make all the difference.

With vast experience and understanding, our specialist team uses the very latest technology and treatments to deliver the best outcomes possible.

From screening and diagnosis to treatment and ongoing support, we are committed to providing outstanding care to those in need.

# About this booklet

We understand it can be overwhelming for anyone to undergo cancer care, but we are here to provide you with help and support.

The focus of this leaflet is to help you and your family understand more about portacath insertion, benefits and discharge instructions.

# Portacath

## What is a portacath and what is it used for?

A portacath is an implanted medical device that goes into a large vein in the neck. It consists of two parts – the port and a catheter. This provides access to the bloodstream.

The device can be used for administering Intravenous medications and for taking blood samples. It reduces the need for inserting needles in the arm hence making treatment more comfortable. The device is completely buried under the skin and only noticeable by a small area under the skin.

A portacath can be left in for a long period of time, so it can be used throughout your treatment.

## Are there any risks?

Like any surgical procedure, there are risks. However serious complications from insertion of a portacath are rare. Bleeding, entrance of air into a vein, scarring, infections and formation of clots are some of the risks associated with insertion and use of a portacath. You will be extensively counselled about the risks prior to the procedure by the surgeon.

## How do I prepare for the procedure?

- A complete blood test and clotting profile will be done on or before the day of the procedure.
- A medication review will be done. If you are taking blood thinners or anticoagulants, this may need to be stopped temporarily 24–48 hours before the procedure. Also, if you are diabetic, let your doctor or nurse know.
- You will need to fast for six hours before the procedure. Sometimes, clear liquids such as water can be taken for up to three hours before the procedure if necessary.
- You will need a responsible adult to take you home after the procedure

## How is the portacath inserted?

Usually it is done in the minor operative room. The area of insertion will be cleaned and draped with sterile materials and some local anaesthetic drugs will be given under the skin to numb the area of insertion. IV medications will also be given to relax you and for pain management.

The vein in the neck will be located with an ultrasound and cannulated. A small skin incision will be made where the port will be buried, just slightly below your collar bone. The catheter will then be tunnelled under the skin until it reaches the vein. Both incisions will then be closed with sutures.

## Following insertion of a portacath

- A chest X-ray may be done to confirm placement and position of the portacath.
- Take your medications as prescribed. This will usually include analgesics and antibiotics.
- Dressings may need to remain in place for a duration that is advised by the surgeon. The dressings can, however, be removed if the portacath needs to be accessed within this period. If immediate use is required after insertion, the port will be accessed during the insertion of the portacath.
- You can have a shower 24 hours after the procedure. However avoid being totally immersed in water, i.e. swimming, using a hot tub or bath etc., until after your wound has healed.
- When the portacath is being used for treatment, the needle is changed once a week. When not being used, you need to come in for a port flush once a month to prevent the catheter from being blocked.
- Avoid trauma to the area of insertion.
- A follow-up appointment will be given to check for healing and signs of infection.
- Only allow personnel trained on how to use a port to deliver IV medications or take samples.

## When to call your doctor

Call your doctor right away if you have any of the following:

- severe pain, swelling, bleeding or discharge around the area of incision
- fever
- chest pain, shortness of breath, increased heart rate, coughing up blood
- feeling unwell.

## Kindly note

You may have received medication that helped to minimize pain and helped you to relax during the procedure. This is considered conscious sedation. Medications used are known to stay in the body for up to 12 hours after being administered. It is important to note that these drugs can affect coordination and cause mental clouding amongst other side effects. Activities like driving, operating machinery and making important decisions might be impaired and hence should be avoided for the next 24 hours.

If you have any other questions or information about the portacath, please ring our client services managers on +234 809 042 5888 or + 234 906 200 0773.



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