

Surgical Insertion of a Port

What is a port?

A port is a device that is inserted under the skin and allows for the administration of medications and fluids. The main advantage is a reduced need for needles. The port has two main parts; a long thin flexible catheter and a reservoir with a rubber top (**Figure 1**). The port will feel like a bottle top under the skin. A special needle, called a Huber needle, must always be used as it does not make holes in the rubber top of the port (**Figure 2**). When the Huber needle is in the port this is called an accessed port. Your port can last for many months or years.

How is it inserted?

A port is inserted under a general anaesthetic in the operating suite. You will be asleep for the procedure and the anaesthetist will manage any pain. The surgeon will make two small cuts. One will be on the neck to feed the catheter into a blood vessel. The other cut is on the chest near where the port sits under the skin (**Figure 3**).

Dressings

A clear plastic water resistant dressing keeps the cuts clean and dry. When the port is accessed, the Huber needle is kept in place with gauze, adhesive strips and a large clear plastic water resistant dressing over the top (**Figure 4**). Dressings and Huber needles are changed at least every six days, or as required. If the port is not accessed no dressing is needed.

Pain

When in hospital any pain or discomfort is managed by the nurse. At home you can use a cold compress on the site and take paracetamol if required. Ask the nurse if you have any questions or need more information.

After an Anaesthetic

Eating — light foods like sandwiches, soup and jelly are recommended. Babies should feed as normal.

Vomiting — feeling sick or vomiting once or twice after leaving hospital, is normal. Stop eating for an hour and then try light foods again. If vomiting continues please call your doctor.

Activity — rest for a day after a port insertion, with adult supervision.

At Home

It is very important to keep the port and cuts clean. You will receive education from your nurse on how to care for your port at home and how to recognise signs and symptoms that you need to report to your doctor straight away.

Remember to consult your doctor if:

- Vomiting continues after leaving hospital
- You have a temperature
- Area becomes red, swollen or painful
- Bleeding continues under your dressings

Always call if you have questions or notice anything unusual.

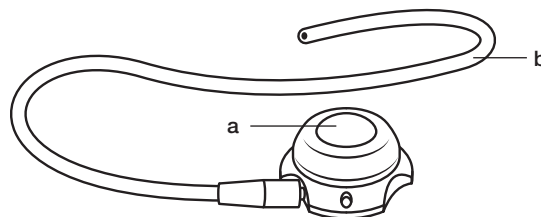


Figure 1. A port with reservoir (a) and flexible catheter (b)

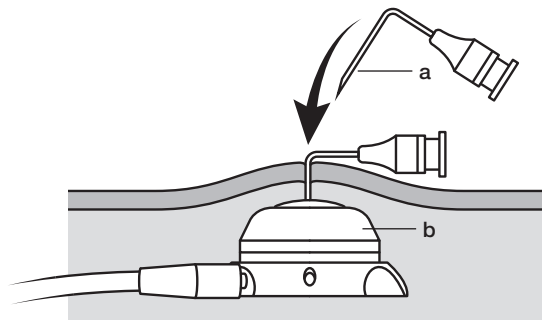


Figure 2. A Huber needle (a) is inserted into the port reservoir (b)

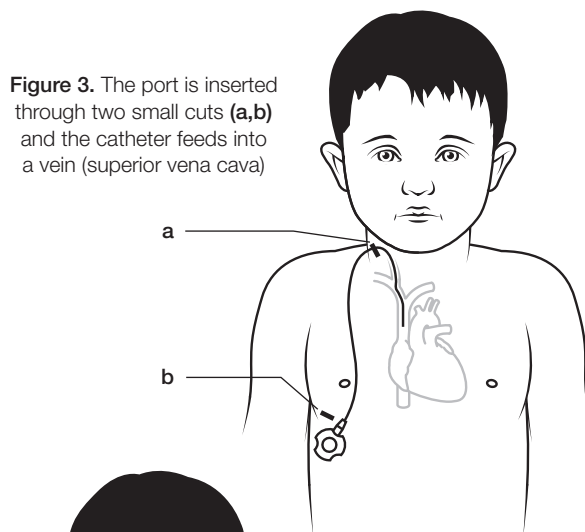


Figure 3. The port is inserted through two small cuts (a,b) and the catheter feeds into a vein (superior vena cava)

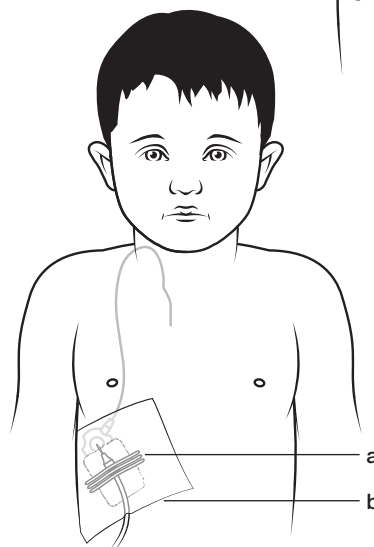


Figure 4. When the port is accessed, the Huber needle is supported with gauze and adhesive strips (a) and then covered with a clear plastic dressing (b)

