

# Cardiac & Endovascular Center

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)



### Portacath

#### What is a portacath?

A portacath is a silicone type device for IV access in patients who require frequent or continuous administration of IV substances such as blood and chemotherapy. The major users of portacaths are oncology patients. Portacaths are silicone catheters with a silicone bubble (or reservoir), which is placed under the skin in the upper chest. This appears and feels like a quarter sized bump under the skin. The port is completely internal so swimming and bathing are not a problem after the healing time.

#### How do I prepare for a portacath?

- You should not have anything to eat or drink after midnight the night before.
- If you take medications, you may take them the morning of procedure with sips of water unless your physician has specified otherwise.
- Any type of blood thinners such as Coumadin, Aspirin, or Plavix may be held at least five days prior to the procedure.
- If you are diabetic and taking Insulin you will be given specific instructions on dosing the day of procedure.
- You should bring a list of all your current medication so the physician can review them the day of the procedure.
- You will need a ride home.
- You will be changed into a hospital gown for the procedure. You may wear your glasses, hearing aids, dentures and jewelry (with the exception of necklaces) the day of the procedure.
- Please keep all other valuables at home.
- You will be asked to scrub your chest area the night before and morning of the procedure with a special hospital antibacterial soap/sponge. These can be picked up at the Cardiac & Endovascular Center prior to your appointment date.
- You will also be asked to obtain lab work within 30 days of the procedure, but no later than 48 hours before.
- A nurse from the Cardiac and Endovascular Center will call you the night before with any question or concerns.

#### Who does the portacath insertion?

An interventional radiologist using X-Ray and ultrasound guidance will place the portacath. There will also be registered nurses and special procedure radiology technologists to assist in the procedure.

#### Where is the portacath performed?

The portacath procedure will be performed in our new state of the art Cardiac & Endovascular Center at Melrose-Wakefield Hospital.



### What happens during the portacath placement?

You will be brought into the procedure room and placed on the X-Ray table. You will be placed on our monitoring system and your chest area will be cleaned off again with a cleansing solution. The area on the neck or chest will be injected with a numbing medication or local anesthetic to "freeze" the area. The physician will then gain access into the vein with a needle and place a wire into the vein using X-Ray and ultrasound guidance. A "pocket" is then made by the physician right under the skin on the chest wall for the reservoir to be placed. Once this is completed the pocket is irrigated with an antibiotic solution and the catheter is fed into the jugular vein to the superior vena cava (the largest vein in the chest). The port is then accessed (or a needle is placed in the reservoir to check that there are no issues and it is flushed with saline and Heparin). The area is then sutured closed and the staff places an occlusive dressing over the site. You are then transported to our recovery area to be monitored.

### How long does the procedure take?

The procedure takes about 45 minutes to one hour.

### What happens after the portacath procedure?

You will be brought to the recovery area for additional monitoring for at least an hour. We will monitor your vital signs and the port site for any signs of bleeding. You will be allowed to eat and drink at this time and will be given pain medication if needed.

Following your recovery period, you will be allowed out of bed and your discharge instructions will be given. Your escort/ride will be called at this time if they are not already present. You will be given a follow-up appointment at this time to have the site checked by one of the interventional radiologists in about 7-10 days. Your activity will be restricted until this time.

**Melrose-Wakefield Hospital**  
**585 Lebanon St.**  
**Melrose, MA 02176**

**Lawrence Memorial Hospital**  
**170 Governors Ave.**  
**Medford, MA 02155**

**To schedule an appointment call (781) 979-3999.**



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