

## Information for patients receiving bolus or short duration vesicant chemotherapy through an implanted port:

Your cancer treatment includes one or more chemotherapy drugs called vesicants. Vesicants are intended to be given into a vein but for various reasons, they sometimes leak outside of the vein into the tissue and cause tissue or organ damage. The degree of damage that can occur depends on the vesicant (some cause minor tissue damage while other vesicants can cause major damage), the amount of the vesicant that goes into the tissue, and the location on the body where it leaks from the vein. Implanted ports help reduce the chance that vesicants will leak from the vein. In rare instances, however, these devices may break, malfunction, or not work as intended. If this happens, vesicants can possibly leak from the vein into the surrounding area and cause damage.

Your nurse will do everything possible to carefully administer your chemotherapy. You can do the following things to help reduce the chance that a vesicant will leak and cause tissue or organ damage:

- Know the name of the port that was inserted into your arm or chest area. You may have received a small card with this information and the date it was inserted; if so, carry this card with you. If not, write the name of your port along with the date it was inserted on a piece of paper and carry it with you. Some ports have one lumen (one area that connects to the vein) while others are dual lumen ports that have two areas that can be used to connect to the vein. Your surgeon likely told you which type of port you have; if not, ask your doctor or nurse.
- Wear clothes that are comfortable and provide easy access to your port on the days you receive chemotherapy.
- Most ports are placed in the upper chest area, and a few are placed in the arm or abdomen. Your nurse will cleanse the skin and insert a special needle to your port so it can be used for chemotherapy. You may feel slight pressure or feel your nurse pressing down as the needle is inserted. You should not feel pain or excessive probing as the needle is inserted.
- When your nurse checks for a blood return and flushes your port, focus for just a minute on how this feels to you. If you feel an odd sensation in your neck, around the needle site, or anywhere else, let your nurse know.
- Your nurse should obtain a blood return from your port. If a blood return does not appear and you are seated upright in a chair or bed, you will be placed in a flat position or in a position with your head slighter lower than the rest of your body. Usually, a blood return can then be obtained. If a blood return still cannot be obtained, your nurse will manage the situation according to the policies of your treatment facility. You may need an x-ray or dye study of the port, you might have a small clot at the end of your port that needs to be dissolved, or you may need to have something else done. Your nurse will tell you what needs to be done and why. For your safety, a vesicant chemotherapy drug is not given unless your nurse confirms that the port needle is securely and correctly placed into the port and your port is in the right place and functions correctly.
- As you receive a vesicant, tell your nurse right away if the port needle site or surrounding area feels uncomfortable, painful, itchy, or in any way unusual. Let your nurse know as soon as your port site starts feeling differently. Do not wait to see if the symptoms continue or worsen.
- If you are receiving fluids or a vesicant by IV infusion (dripping in from a bag), make sure that the IV tubing is taped to your arm and place it across your lap instead of having it hang off the side of the bed or chair. If your tubing is accidentally pulled or tugged, let your nurse know immediately so your catheter can be checked.

- During the few minutes that it takes for your vesicant chemotherapy to be given, avoid moving around. Do not raise your arms up over your head, and do not touch or rub the dressing that has been placed over the port. Avoiding unnecessary movement helps reduce the chance that the port needle will dislodge and allow the vesicant to leak into the tissue and cause damage.
- Look at the skin over your port a few hours after you have received your chemotherapy treatment, and look at it again the next day. If you see any swelling or redness, or if the port site feels warm, tender, or uncomfortable, contact your nurse or doctor right away. Tissue damage from vesicant chemotherapy might not be apparent when chemotherapy is given, but can appear hours to days later.

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