Accessing and Flushing a Port-a-Cath

Receiving medicine and supplies
When you receive a shipment, make sure you have the correct medicine and supplies. Check the medicine/supplies and invoice for your child’s name, prescription and quantity. If all is correct, sign/date the invoice and accept the delivery. It is important to keep the yellow copy of your invoices for future reference. We are unable to take back any supplies once they are in your home. Carefully look at the flush syringes, checking for leaks, cracks and that it has not expired. See the pharmacy label for storage of medications and supplies.

The Port dressing
Check the dressing several times each day. Make sure the transparent dressing is stuck to the skin at least 1 inch around the needle. If the dressing is peeling up around the edges, reinforce by placing transparent dressing around these edges. If the dressing is loose and not able to keep the needle secure, you will need to change the dressing.

Bathing
• Your child can shower/bathe. However, do not submerge the catheter or dressing under water.
• Protect the catheter cap from moisture by using Parafilm. Cut a large square. Scrub the cap and connection to the catheter with alcohol for 15 seconds, then let dry for 15 seconds. Stretch the Parafilm over the catheter cap and connection to the catheter hub.
• Protect the catheter dressing by placing Aqua Guard over the dressing.
• Inspect the dressing after bathing. If it is loose with water underneath, change the dressing. Only change the dressing if you have been trained by Home Care Services.

Flushing the Port
• If the Port seems difficult to flush, call Home Care immediately during business hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. A nurse will talk with you and decide if further assessment is needed.
• After normal hours, call our main number. Follow the prompts to access the answering service. A nurse will call back to assess the situation by phone and give instruction.

#_____ saline syringes with _____ ml of saline per syringe.
#_____ heparin (_____ unit/ml) syringes with _____ ml of heparin per syringe.
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Flush syringes

- Saline flush syringe
- Blue heparin flush syringe 10 units/ml

Supplies

- Work surface or tray
- Cleaning product
- Alcohol-based hand gel
- Non-sterile gloves
- Sharps container
- Dressing change kit (open)
- Large tegaderm
- Port needle (out of the package)
- MicroClave catheter cap
- Alcohol pads
- Aquaguard
- Parafilm
Preventing the work surface
1. Clean the work surface well with disinfectant and allow to air dry.
2. Wash hands well with soap and water.
3. Gather supplies and place them in a clean spot near the work area.
4. Open the dressing change kit. Handling the edges only, carefully open the drape that covers the supplies. The inside of this wrapper will become the “sterile field.”
5. Remove the sterile gloves pack and set aside.
6. Open and drop the Biopatch, cap and Port needle onto the sterile drape.
7. Wash or gel hands. Put on sterile gloves.
8. Attach the saline syringe to the catheter cap. Fill the cap with saline.
9. Attach the catheter cap with the attached syringe to the end of the Port needle tubing.
10. Push the syringe plunger, filling the needle's tubing with saline until it reaches the end of the needle.

Cleaning the Port site
1. Open the ChloraPrep triple swab packet.
2. Scrub the Port site and surrounding skin with each swab stick for 10 seconds.
3. Allow the area to fully air dry for at least 30 seconds.

Accessing the Port
1. With 1 hand, stabilize the Port and find the center of the Port chamber.
2. Hold the Port needle with your other hand. Insert the needle into the center of the Port, pushing until you feel the needle touch the back of the Port.
3. Pull back on the saline syringe, checking for blood return.

If you are unable to get blood return:
- Change positions. Sit up, lie down, raise the arm nearest to the Port over the head, turn the head to the side opposite the Port, then recheck for blood return.
- If you are still unable to get good blood return, but certain the needle is in correctly, begin to flush slowly with saline. Watch and feel for swelling/discomfort around the access site.
- If you are not certain the needle is in the Port, pull the needle out. Try again with a new needle and sterile setup.
- Contact the Home Care Services nurse with difficulties accessing the Port.
4. After blood return, flush the Port with saline.
5. If the Port will remain accessed, cover with transparent dressing. Secure the dressing from the insertion site outward.
6. If giving medicine/IV fluid, see the SASH/SASASH handout.
7. If flushing only:
   - Remove the saline syringe from the catheter cap.
   - Attach and flush briskly with the heparin syringe.
   - Clamp the catheter line.
   - De-access following the instructions below.

8. Remove gloves. Wash or gel hands.

**De-accessing the Port**
1. Remove the old dressing.
2. Stabilize the Port with 1 hand.
3. With the other hand, pinch the wings and pull the Port needle out.
4. Use sterile gauze to apply pressure to the site.
5. Observe the site for redness, drainage or unusual swelling. Report anything new to your doctor.
6. Place gauze and tape on the site if re-access is not needed.
7. Place the used needle in the sharps container.
8. Remove gloves. Wash or gel hands.

**Troubleshooting chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redness, drainage, swelling or</td>
<td>Check your child’s temperature. Call Home Care Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pain at site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressing loosened</td>
<td>Dressing edges may be reinforced by cutting pieces of a transparent dressing and placing along the edges that are loose. The dressing must always stick at least ( \frac{3}{4} ) inch all the way around the insertion site of the catheter. Always protect it from moisture by covering it during bathing. Change it right away if it becomes loose, soiled or wet. Call Home Care Services if you are having difficulty with the dressing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty flushing</td>
<td>Observe the line for kinks and closed clamps in the tubing under the dressing. Try the ideas listed under the section, “How do I place the needle…” Call Home Care Services if you are still unable to flush the line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaking</td>
<td>Attempt to tighten the catheter cap and then flush, looking for leaks in the tubing or from the site. A new Port needle could be tried. Call Home Care Services if leaking continues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood back-up in line</td>
<td>This can be related to increased activity in your child and is not an emergency; however, it can increase the risk for infection. Flush with saline and heparin. Do not flush more than your child’s daily maximum dosage of heparin. If you are unsure of what to do, please call Home Care Services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Who to call

- For emergencies: Call 911 for ALL emergencies. Notify Home Care Services about your child’s status after the emergency situation is addressed.
- For urgent issues after business hours Call Home Care Services at 425-482-4000 or 800-888-4429, and press “0” to reach our answering service for urgent issues that cannot wait until the morning or if you are unsure what to do. A Home Care Services nurse will return your call as soon as possible.
- For supplies: Contact Home Care Services between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. to order supplies. Call 425-482-4000 or 800-888-4429. Please contact us at least 1 week ahead so that you do not run out. Always keep an extra 3 to 5 days of supplies, and 1 dose of medication on hand in case of emergency.