
Central Venous Access Device: What Do I Need to Know?



Comments, Feedback?

Contact Patient and Professional Education
519-685-8742

Email: lrcpeducation@lhsc.on.ca

Reviewed by the LRCP Patient Education Committee
August 2007

Written and produced by London Regional Cancer Program,
London Health Sciences Centre. Direct inquiries to
lrcpeducation@lhsc.on.ca.



London Health Sciences Centre
London Regional Cancer Program



Stratford General Hospital
Satellite Clinic of London Regional Cancer Program
46 General Hospital Drive
Stratford, ON N5A 2Y6
519-271-2120 ext. 2344
www.hpha.ca

Table of Contents

What is an Implanted Central Venous Access Device (CVAD)?	1
What do I need to know before getting a CVAD procedure?	2
How do I prepare for the CVAD insertion procedure?	2
What will happen during the procedure?	2
What do I need to do after the procedure?	3
Can I shower, bath or go swimming?	4
What will happen when the CVAD is used?	4
When do I need to call for help?	5
When will the CVAD be removed?	5

Chemotherapy Unit at the London Regional Cancer Program (LRCP). The chamber is accessed by the chemotherapy nurse with a special needle called a Huber Needle.

After each use, a solution will be injected into the CVAD to help keep it from clotting.

If it is not being used, a chemotherapy nurse or visiting nurse will flush the CVAD every 4 weeks.

When do I need to call for help?

Call the LRCP telephone triage nurse at 519-685-8600 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. and press option '3' if you have any of the following:

- Pain where the CVAD is inserted and in the neck area that lasts for **more than 48 hours**;
- Bleeding and excessive bruising that lasts for **more than 24 hours**;
- Swelling or redness that gets worse;
- Fever of more than 38°C or 100°F;
- Shortness of breath;
- Dizziness.

If you call after hours or on weekends, ask for the on-call medical oncologist.

When will the CVAD be removed?

The CVAD may be removed when your treatment is finished. The process will be very similar (almost the same) to when the CVAD was inserted.

tenderness and swelling for up to 3 weeks. Keep your “**Medical Alert**” identification card with you at all times. This card will be given to you before you leave SJHC.

Avoid lifting or putting pressure where the CVAD is inserted for at least 2 weeks. Women should wear a bra to help relieve any tension on the two small incisions until it heals.

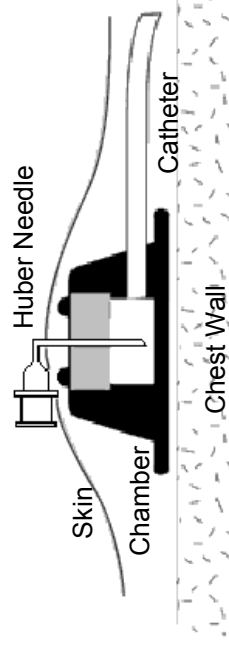
Can I shower, bath or go swimming?

You can take a bath as long as the CVAD area remains dry. You can sponge bath the area to keep it clean. Once it has healed, you should be able to shower, bath normally, and go swimming. It will take about 7 to 10 days for the area to heal.

What will happen when the CVAD is used?

The area where the CVAD is inserted may be tender when it is used for the first time. To help ease the discomfort, you can use Emla Cream®, which will numb the area. Apply this cream about 1 hour before the CVAD is used. Emla Cream® is available at most pharmacies without a prescription.

The CVAD is used to give chemotherapy, fluids, blood products, and to draw blood for tests. This will be done in the



Huber Needle inserted into chamber

Used by Permission: ILAR journal [Vol. 43(3)], National Academy of Science, Washington, DC

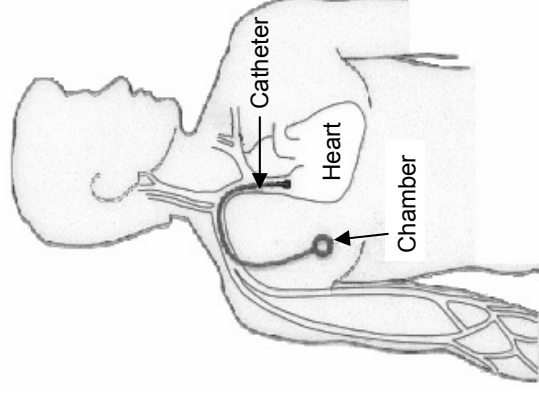
What is an Implanted Central Venous Access Device (CVAD)?

If you are getting chemotherapy to treat your cancer, you may get a Central Venous Access Device (CVAD). The purpose of a CVAD is to give chemotherapy, fluids, and to draw blood.

This implanted CVAD is made of two parts called the chamber and the catheter. The **chamber** is about the size of a “loonie.” The chamber is the part where a needle is put in to give the medicine. The **catheter** is a flexible tube where the medicine travels to a major vein in your chest.

The CVAD is safe and can remain in place for months or even years.

A radiologist will do the procedure. Once inserted, the CVAD will be visible as a small raised area beneath your skin.



Used by permission B. Braun Medical Inc.

What do I need to know before getting a CVAD procedure?

Blood work will be done before the procedure. CVAD procedures are done at St. Joseph's Health Care, London (SJHC). You should plan to be at the hospital for the whole day. You will also need to arrange for someone to drive you home after the procedure.

How do I prepare for the CVAD insertion procedure?

The night before the CVAD is inserted, you may only drink clear fluids after midnight. You may take your medications with a small amount of water the morning of the procedure.



If you are taking **Metformin, Avandamet** or you **have an allergy to x-ray dye**, tell your oncologist and the SJHC's Radiology Department (519-646-6044) at the time of your booking.



If you are on **Coumadin (Warfarin)**, discuss with your oncologist about stopping this medicine. You may need to **STOP** taking this medication for five days before this procedure.



Report to St. Joseph's Health Care Radiology Department **two hours** before your appointment.

What will happen during the procedure?

You will get a local anesthetic and a mild sedative to help ease any pain. You should not feel any pain when the CVAD is being inserted. If you do, tell the doctor and you will be given



Cleaning the site before the procedure

more medicine. You will be able to talk with people in the room during the procedure.

It can take up to three hours to do the CVAD procedure.

When it is done, you will get a chest x-ray to confirm its position. You will be in the recovery room for about 1 to 2 hours afterwards.

After the procedure a dressing will be placed over the stitches. You will need to keep the dressing in place for one week. The stitches may take up to 2 months to dissolve.

Before you go home, you will get a prescription for pain medication in case you feel any pain.

What do I need to do after the procedure?

Try to stay in a sitting position for as long as possible, including during the evening. Sitting upright helps to reduce the amount of swelling and bruising in the chest area. Take some pain medication if you feel any pain. It will take about 7 to 10 days for the area to heal. You may feel some