

# Your Health Matters--Providing Better Care

## *Central venous access device information*

At the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, ensuring you have the very best care available is our priority. Inserting a central venous access device is one option for your care that can help provide better access for chemotherapy and other intravenous medications. Ask a member of your healthcare team if a central venous access device is right for you.



### **What is a central venous access device (CVAD)?**

A CVAD or central line is a thin, flexible tube that is placed into a large vein above the heart. It can be inserted in the neck, chest or arm and can be left in place for long periods of time. The CVAD provides a safe way to deliver cancer treatment and supportive care intravenously without repeated needle sticks to veins in your hand and arm.

### **Why do I need a CVAD?**

A CVAD can be used to:

- Deliver chemotherapy and other medicines
- Receive intravenous (IV) fluids
- Receive blood and platelet transfusions
- Reduce the number of needle sticks you may need
- Prevent the burning feeling sometimes felt when getting drugs by other IV methods
- Prevent the inflammation and scarring that can happen in a vein after many needle sticks
- Increase comfort and lessen anxiety for people who often need IV therapy and blood samples taken
- Take blood samples--It is important to note that although CVADs allow for blood to be drawn from them, it requires special training to access these devices and your lab may not be able to do this procedure. In those cases you may still need blood to be drawn from your hands/arms.

### **Are there complications to be aware of with a CVAD?**

While CVADs are generally safe for people to have inserted, you should be aware that in some circumstance they can cause some complications:

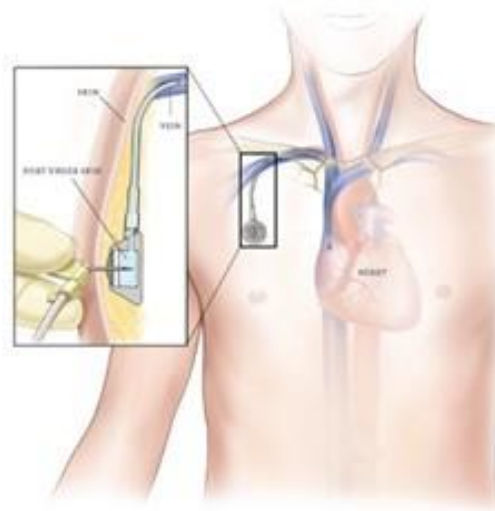
- Blood clots
- Infection
- Blockage
- Catheter tip may move out of intended vein
- Breakage
- IV fluid can flow under the skin instead of into the vein



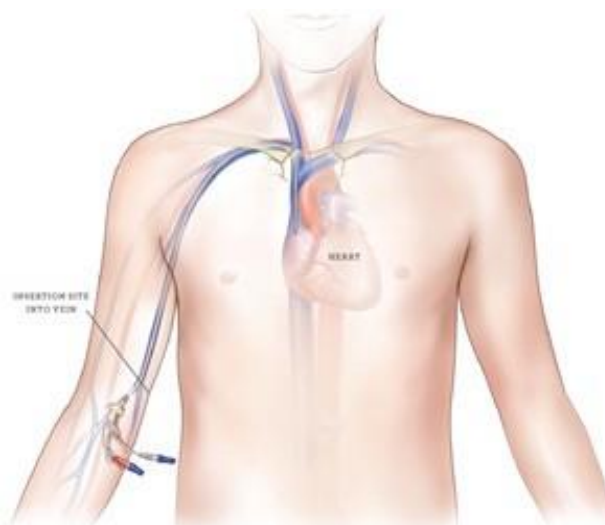
### What are the most commonly used types of CVAD?

The two most common types of CVADs used in your care are:

- Implanted venous access device (IVAD), also known as a port  
IVAD – a small device placed beneath the skin, usually in the chest or the arm. It is a small basin that has a self-sealing rubber top called a septum. The IVAD connects to a small, soft tube called a catheter. The catheter is placed inside one of the large central veins that take blood to your heart. A special needle is put into the septum, which creates access to your bloodstream to deliver cancer treatment and supportive care intravenously.



- Peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC), which is a central venous catheter made from a soft, flexible material. The PICC is inserted into a large vein located above the bend of the elbow with a small portion remaining on the outside of the skin to create access to your bloodstream. The catheter has a winged portion to help it attach to the skin. The wings and the insertion site will be covered with a dressing. A cap is attached to the end of each of the line(s). The line(s) create access to your bloodstream to deliver cancer treatment and supportive care intravenously



### What is the most appropriate CVAD for me?

It is important to talk over the pros and cons of each type of CVAD with your healthcare team to decide which device is best for you. There may be some instances when getting a CVAD may not be the right choice for you.

Considerations	IVAD	PICC
<b>Infection rate</b>	Lower	Higher
<b>Care of line</b>	Monthly, if not accessed	Weekly
<b>Location</b>	Lump under the skin	Tube outside the body
<b>Pain</b>	Needle poke to access IVAD	Weekly dressing changes
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hidden under the skin</li> <li>• No external line</li> <li>• Once healed you can bathe and swim</li> <li>• Long term access (years if necessary)</li> <li>• Can be used for CT and MRI imaging</li> <li>• Dressing is only needed when IVAD is first inserted and when it is accessed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No needle is needed for access</li> <li>• Easy to insert and remove</li> <li>• Can be used for CT and MRI imaging</li> <li>• Short/long term access (less than one year)</li> <li>• Usually has two access points capable of providing two drugs at the same time</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurse is needed to access the IVAD</li> <li>• Special needle required</li> <li>• Insertion is a surgical procedure</li> <li>• More difficult to remove</li> <li>• May require a longer wait time to have it inserted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurse is needed to access the PICC</li> <li>• Weekly dressing changes required</li> <li>• Cannot be submerged in water</li> <li>• Cannot swim with the PICC in place</li> <li>• May restrict activities</li> <li>• Cannot take blood or blood pressure or blood draws on the arm with the PICC</li> </ul>

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