The most common way to administer chemotherapy medication for cancer treatment is by the IV (intravenous) method. The medication is delivered directly to the bloodstream and then sent throughout the body through a vein. Your doctor will discuss options for IV access and develop a plan based on your treatment schedule.

The most common types of IV access devices for chemotherapy medication are the IV catheter, PICC, implanted port, and tunneled catheter. Medication can be harsh on veins, which may require an IV device that stays in a large vein for a long time.

**IV (Intravenous) Catheter**

An IV catheter is a small, hollow, flexible plastic tube that is inserted into the hand or forearm.

- An IV catheter is usually placed by a nurse on the day of treatment and removed right after chemotherapy is finished.
- It is meant to be a short term IV device, so it can stay in place for no more than four days.

**PICC (Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter)**

A PICC is a long, thin, hollow, flexible tube. It is inserted by a specially-trained nurse or doctor into the upper arm. The end of the catheter rests in a large vein above the heart. The other end of the PICC exits the arm. This is where medication is given and blood samples are drawn.

- A PICC can stay in place for months.
- An X-ray is taken to make sure the PICC is in the correct place.
- The PICC can be used to give chemotherapy and, in some cases, to collect blood samples.
- People with PICCs may perform normal, daily activities but should avoid activities with a lot of arm movement, such as lifting weights, golfing, or digging in a garden.
- A transparent dressing covers the catheter exit site. The dressing is changed weekly, and should be kept clean and dry.
Implanted Port
An implanted port is an IV device with a thin, flexible tube or catheter attached to a small plastic device called a port. The port is surgically placed under the skin. The catheter portion is then threaded into the large vein located directly above the heart.

- You will be able to feel the port under the skin and see a bump on your chest where it is placed.
- A special access needle (non-coring needle) goes through the skin and into the port, delivering medication through the catheter into the bloodstream. The needle stick to access the port feels like a blood sampling stick.
- Blood samples may be drawn from the port.
- A dressing is placed over the access needle while medication is given.
- A dressing is not needed over the area once the needle is removed.
- You may bathe, shower, swim, and perform other daily activities with an implanted port.
- Implanted ports can stay in place for months or years, depending on the type of treatment to be given.

Tunneled Catheter
A tunneled catheter is a long, thin, flexible tube that is surgically threaded into a large vein above the heart. The other end of the catheter exits the body, usually from the upper chest.

- The portion of the catheter exiting the body is capped. Chemotherapy is given and blood samples are drawn from this end of the catheter.
- A dry, clean dressing must stay over the catheter exit site on the chest.
- You may bathe and shower, but the dressing needs to stay dry and clean or be changed if it gets wet or dirty.
- You may perform daily activities.
- Tunneled catheters can stay in place for months or years, depending on the type of treatment to be given.

The right IV access device can make your chemotherapy treatments more effective and more comfortable. Discuss with your doctor or nurse which IV access device is right for you.