

Caring for Your Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

WHAT IS A PERIPHERALLY INSERTED CENTRAL CATHETER?

A peripherally inserted central catheter, often called a “PICC” is a long, thin, flexible catheter that is inserted into one of the large veins in the arm above the elbow. This catheter is then threaded into a large vein above the right side of the heart. Because it is very flexible it can remain in place for several weeks to months as long as it is needed to provide treatment.

A PICC is used to give IV (intravenous) medicines and/or fluids.

The PICC can be flushed and capped off when not in use. When it is time to give medicine, the medicine is connected to the PICC and disconnected again when the medicine infusion is completed. Following disconnection of the IV administration set, the PICC must be flushed & locked with sterile Normal Saline 0.9%. The MD may order the PICC to be locked with Heparin Lock solution in some cases.

PICC CARE

These are the special things that you will need to learn:

- preventing infection
- flushing the PICC
- giving the medicine
- solving problems
- knowing when and who to call for help

A nurse or a Home care nurse will teach you how to do all these things and will be available for questions.

PREVENTING INFECTION

It is very important to prevent infection. An infection might require removal of the PICC.

Cleanliness is a must! The nurse will show you how to keep your supplies sterile, so that no bacteria can enter the PICC and cause an infection.

Hands should be washed well before and after handling the PICC.

The dressing and cap must be changed weekly or if they become compromised in any way.

FLUSHING and LOCKING THE PICC prevents blood from entering the PICC and causing a clot to form.

If that does happen the PICC cannot be used. It will need to be treated to remove the blockage or it may have to be exchanged or removed.

Giving the medicine:

A nurse will teach you how to flush the PICC and give medicines.

GENERAL PICC CARE:

- No repetitive or strenuous activity or heavy lifting with the arm after the PICC is placed.
- Never use scissors to remove tape/dressing from around the PICC.
- To prevent damage to the PICC, do not use pins, sharp clamps or scissors near your PICC.
- Always tape PICC hub to your arm to prevent it from snagging on objects.
- Cover with plastic when showering so the dressing does not get wet. (Waterproof cast covers work well.)
- **Swimming and submersion are not allowed.** Do not let ends of the PICC hang in the bathwater.
- No rough or contact sports as the PICC may move or be damaged.

- Change the dressing & cap every 7 days or sooner if dressing starts to lift, becomes dirty or moisture collects under it. Change the cap if it starts to leak or it becomes soiled

· Avoid having dental work done while the PICC is in place as bacteria can be released into the bloodstream and attach onto the end of the PICC. If dental work is necessary, tell the dentist about the PICC at least 5 days before the dental work.

Problem	Possible Cause	What to Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever, Chills • Soreness, redness, or pus at the insertion site • Swollen arm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take Temperature • Call MD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flushing Problems • Unable to infuse medicine or fluids into the PICC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PICC may be clamped • PICC may be kinked • PICC may be clotted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclamp the PICC • Remove the kink • If not kinked or clamped, do not force the solution into the PICC. Call the Home care RN.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaking from the PICC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cap on the PICC not screwed on tightly • A hole in the PICC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tighten the injection cap • Check the PICC for a tear • If you see a leak in the PICC, clamp it or fold it over & pinch it between the leak and the insertion site & call your home care RN immediately • If you have trouble breathing or chest pain, lie on the left side & call 911
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PICC accidentally comes out 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press on the site with sterile gauze or put a clean bandage on & put pressure on it. • Apply antibacterial ointment once the bleeding has stopped and cover with a new bandage. • Call your doctor or your home care nurse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redness 7/or tenderness of the upper arm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanical Phlebitis – vein irritation from the PICC – which may occur within 1st few days after the PICC is inserted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is not an infection • Apply warm moist packs • Notify MD/RN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of exposed PICC is increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PICC has been pulled out partially 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not attempt to push PICC back in • Cover with gauze • Call home care RN/MD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whooshing sound in ear • Numbness/tingling in arm • Discomfort in jaw, ear, teeth or face on PICC side of body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PICC may have moved • PICC causing nerve irritation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop medication • Notify MD/RN