

Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

What is a PICC?

A PICC is a soft, thin tube that is placed into your arm vein just above or below the inside bend of your elbow. It is threaded up into a larger vein in your chest. A PICC line allows you to get your medicine inside your body faster without causing damage to smaller veins in your arm.

What is a PICC line used for?

A PICC line is used to give medicine or intravenous (IV) fluids at home and take blood samples without having to get a needle stick each time.

What are some important PICC tips to remember?

- Always wash your hands thoroughly using a liquid soap before working with your PICC.
- Your dressing should be changed weekly or sooner if it becomes wet or soiled.
- **NEVER USE SCISSORS** near your PICC or to remove the dressing.
- Check the skin around your PICC daily. Watch for any signs of infection such as:
 - Redness
 - Swelling
 - Tenderness
 - Fever
 - Drainage at the insertion or exit site

If you have difficulty breathing, or have chest pains, dizziness, or confusion call 911 immediately.

Clamp the PICC catheter near where it enters your arm, lie down with your head lower than your hips and feet, and stay quiet until help arrives.

How long will I have a PICC?

Your PICC may be in place for several weeks to months. The length of time depends on your treatment plan.

How do I care for my PICC?

The nurse will change your PICC dressing within 24 hours after it was placed and then on a weekly basis (or more often as needed). The dressing change is a sterile procedure. Your nurse will change your dressing and you and/or your caregiver may learn how to change the dressing. You will also learn how to flush your PICC line before and after giving your IV medicine.

Sometimes you may see some blood under the clear bandage and this is normal. If the blood leaks out from the clear bandage, do not remove the bandage. Wash your hands and put pressure on the area that is bleeding with a gauze pad. Call your home infusion nurse.

How do I bathe or shower when I have a PICC?

Keep your PICC dressing clean and dry to help prevent infection. The best thing to do is use a plastic wrap that self-seals such as Glad® Press'n Seal® or another type of water-proof protective device.

- Cover the PICC dressing with an absorbent material such as a cotton sock or towel, tape in place.
- Wrap the entire arm carefully in plastic wrap so that it is snug and secure but not too tight so that it cuts off blood circulation. The self-sealing wrap should make a tight seal next to your skin. If using a non-sealing wrap you will need to tape at the top and bottom of the wrap around your arm.
- Be sure to check that water does not get in underneath the plastic wrap.
- After bathing, remove the plastic wrap and absorbent material right away and check to see if the PICC dressing is completely dry.

If you prefer to purchase a water-proof protective device here are a few suggestions:

- Arm Protector for PICC or Casts - Regional Home Medical (605) 755-9000
- Kevin's Covers – Adjustable PICC/IV Shower Sleeve www.kevincovers.com

How is my PICC removed?

The PICC may be removed at your doctor's office, at an ambulatory infusion center, or by your home health nurse. The dressing will be removed and the PICC will be gently pulled out. Most patients do not experience any discomfort. A gauze pad will be placed over the exit site and can be removed after 24 hours.

Call your doctor if you have:

- Fever or chills
- Drainage coming out of the PICC exit site
- Redness, warmth, swelling, or a pink/red streak going up your arm
- A "knot" that feels like a cord anywhere on your arm

For questions or concerns, please call Regional Home+ Home Infusion at (605) 755-1150.