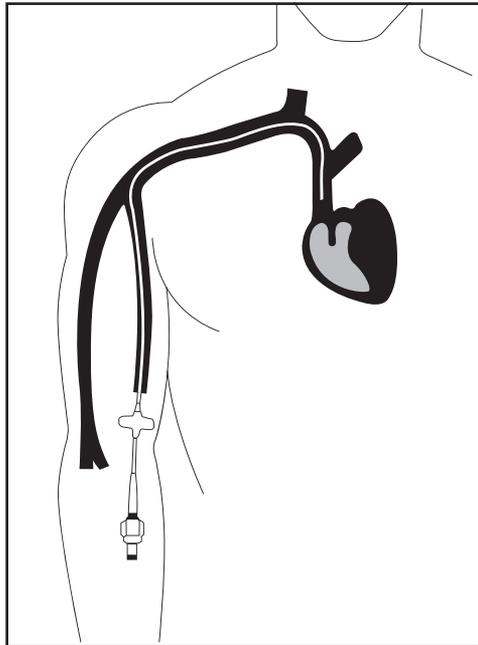


# All About Your Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)



## **General Information**

Intravenous (IV) therapy is the delivery of fluid directly into a vein. An intravenous catheter is a hollow tube that is placed in a vein to deliver the fluid. Veins in the hand and lower arm can become tender and sore from long term intravenous therapy.

A catheter has been made that is easy to insert, comfortable for you and can remain in place until treatment is complete. This catheter is called a Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter or a "PICC".

The following information is a guide for you to follow. Your doctor or nurse may change some of the information to meet your individual needs.

## **What is a PICC?**

A PICC is a soft flexible tube or catheter that is inserted into an arm vein above the elbow. The catheter is threaded up the arm in a vein until the tip is in a large vein near your heart. The PICC is made for long term use and can be left in place for as long as you need it.

## **What to expect when a PICC is inserted:**

A PICC can be inserted in your room, a treatment room, or the X-Ray Department. Freezing is put in your skin to keep you comfortable and special care is taken to prevent infection. A chest x-ray may be taken after the PICC is inserted to check where the tip is located.

Before the PICC is inserted let the nurse know if you would like some medication to relax you.

## **What to expect in the first few days:**

The first dressing change may be one or two days after the PICC is inserted. Then the dressing will be changed once a week or when it is loose, wet, or unclean.

Occasionally a vein may become sore for the first few days after a PICC is inserted. It is important to place a warm wet towel in a plastic bag over the sore area for 20 minutes 3 to 4 times a day. To make sure you do not burn yourself use warm tap water to heat the towel, do not use the microwave. A warm bean bag may be used. Speak with your nurse or doctor about taking an anti-inflammatory medication.

## **Taking care of your PICC at home:**

- Community Health Nurses will see you at a community clinic or at your home. They will assist you to care for your PICC.
- Weekly dressing changes are needed (sometimes more frequently).
- Community Health Nurses may teach you or someone you trust how to give your IV medication.
- Look at your site once a day. The PICC dressing should be dry and intact. The PICC site should be free from tenderness, redness, drainage or swelling.
- Contact your Community Health Nurse if a problem is detected.

## **Are there restrictions to my daily living?**

- Avoid carrying bags or purses over your “PICC” shoulder.
- When you shower or bathe wrap the PICC arm with plastic wrap and tape it to your skin. This stops water leaking under the dressing. Do not put your arm under the water if you are in a bath tub. When you are out of the bath or shower, remove the plastic wrap and pat the arm dry with a clean towel.
- Avoid strenuous activity or activities that have constant arm movement, such as: moving heavy objects over 10 pounds or 4.5 kilograms, jumping jacks, weight lifting, or vacuuming. Performing these activities may cause the PICC to block or the tip of the PICC to move out of the correct position.
- Moderate exercise, such as walking, does not harm your PICC.
- Do not swim or get into a hot tub. It is difficult to stop water from getting under the PICC dressing and causing an infection.
- Always take your medications on time
- Follow instructions carefully, they are designed to prevent problems.

## **Will the catheter affect my ability to be intimate with my partner?**

No, it should not interfere. Please do not hesitate to discuss this with your doctor or nurse.

## **Can some chemicals damage the catheter?**

Yes, nail polish remover and tape removers should not be used. Remember to only use the supplies that have been discussed with you.

## Be able to detect problems and know what to do:

Do not expect problems, but be ready if they happen. The following is a list of potential problems with specific information about each one.

What if I experience or see....	What should I do?	How do I avoid it?
<p><b>1. Infection:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever or chills.</li> <li>• Temperature above 38°C or 101°F.</li> <li>• Flu-like feeling, lack of energy.</li> <li>• Redness, swelling, and/or pus at the PICC site.</li> <li>• PICC site feels warm to touch.</li> <li>• Nausea and/or vomiting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call your nurse immediately.</li> <li>• If you are unable to reach your Community Health Nurse go to the nearest Hospital Emergency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wash hands before doing any PICC care.</li> <li>• Keep fingers away from sterile points and connections.</li> <li>• Keep your PICC dressing dry.</li> <li>• Call your nurse if your PICC dressing is wet, loose or you see drainage.</li> <li>• Look at your site once a day. The PICC dressing should be dry and intact. The PICC site should be free from redness, drainage or swelling.</li> <li>• Keep supplies clean and dry.</li> <li>• When cleaning with alcohol make sure it dries completely.</li> <li>• Everyone who uses your PICC should follow the steps described above. If they do not, tell them you are concerned about infection. The PICC is yours to look after!</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Bleeding under the dressing, more than a teaspoon amount</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call your nurse.</li> <li>• Your PICC dressing will need to be changed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the instructions under “restriction” as overuse of your arm can contribute to bleeding under the dressing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. How will I know if I have a clot in my vein?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swelling of your PICC hand, arm, or neck.</li> <li>• Pain in your PICC arm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call your nurse.</li> <li>• If your nurse is not available go to the nearest hospital.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell your Nurse immediately if your PICC arm is sore.</li> <li>• Good hydration is important.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. What do I do if I feel my heart beating differently when I lie on my side?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go to the nearest hospital emergency department, the PICC may need to be withdrawn slightly.</li> </ul>	

<b>What if I experience or see....</b>	<b>What should I do?</b>	<b>How do I avoid it?</b>
<p><b>5. How will I know if my vein is irritated?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redness, swelling, pain or warmth at the PICC site or along your arm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place a warm wet towel in a plastic bag or warm bean bag over the sore area for 20 minutes 3 to 4 times a day. The towel and bean bag should feel comfortable on your skin. If they are too hot you may burn your arm.</li> <li>• Elevate your PICC arm.</li> <li>• Call the nurse the next day if these measures have not worked.</li> <li>• Speak with your nurse or doctor about taking an anti-inflammatory medication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use your arm normally. Do not keep it stiff.</li> <li>• Do not carry bags or purses over your PICC shoulder.</li> <li>• Elevate your arm whenever possible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Blocked catheter or the IV will not run</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IV medication will not run or is running slowly.</li> <li>• If a pump is used to give your medication the pump may alarm.</li> <li>• Unable to flush the PICC easily.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure the IV tubing clamp is opened.</li> <li>• Make sure the tubing is not kinked.</li> <li>• Look at your PICC dressing, the PICC line should be not be kinked.</li> <li>• Call the nurse if these measures have not worked.</li> <li>• If the Community Health Nurse is not available, stop the pump, take the battery out and call the Nurse first thing in the morning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure the IV tubing clamp cannot be accidentally clamped.</li> <li>• PICC dressing is changed by nurses only.</li> <li>• After the PICC dressing is changed make sure the PICC is not bent under the dressing.</li> <li>• The PICC is flushed with normal saline as per your nurse's instruction.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. What do I do if blood is seen in the PICC?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have been taught by your Community Health Nurse how to flush your PICC do so. Flush until no blood is seen in the PICC.</li> <li>• If you meet resistance when you flush , stop and contact your nurse.</li> <li>• If you have not been taught to flush your PICC, call your nurse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the instructions under “restriction” as overuse of your arm can contribute to blood backing up into the PICC.</li> <li>• Make sure you are flushing the PICC as instructed if you are giving your own medications.</li> </ul>

What if I experience or see....	What should I do?	How do I avoid it?
<p><b>8. Air in the PICC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 6”/15 cm of air in IV tubing.</li> <li>• Short of breath or chest pain.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop the IV fluid, turn off the pump.</li> <li>• Call your nurse.</li> <li>• If you are short of breath or have chest pain call 911 right away and lie down on your left side.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check that the IV tubing is free of air when you set up the tubing.</li> <li>• Make sure your PICC does not break.</li> </ul>
<p><b>9. Accidental removal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catheter sticking out more than before or completely comes out of your arm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the catheter comes out completely, put pressure on the area until the bleeding stops.</li> <li>• Cover the site with a dressing.</li> <li>• Call the Community Health Nurse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure the catheter is taped in place and that the dressing is not loose.</li> <li>• Avoid pulling on the tubing or on the PICC.</li> </ul>
<p><b>10. Leaking or broken catheter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluid under the dressing.</li> <li>• Breakage or separation of the PICC.</li> <li>• Pain in the arm, especially when the medication is being delivered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop the IV medication.</li> <li>• If you were given a clamp. Clamp the PICC between the break and where the PICC goes into your body.</li> <li>• If you were not given a clamp. Fold the PICC back on itself between the break and where the PICC goes into your body. This will stop air from going in or blood from coming out of the PICC. Place the broken PICC section that remains in you inside sterile gauze then wrap with tape. This will prevent infection.</li> <li>• Call your Nurse. If your Nurse is not available go to the nearest Hospital Emergency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not pull on the PICC or IV tubing.</li> <li>• Ensure PICC/IV tubing is taped to your skin.</li> <li>• Use a 10 mL syringe or larger to flush the PICC.</li> <li>• Do not use force to flush the PICC.</li> <li>• Do not use scissors near the PICC.</li> </ul>
<p><b>11. What do I do if the cap comes off?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no cap on the PICC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean the open end of the PICC with an alcohol swab and attach a new cap.</li> <li>• Call your Nurse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold onto the cap when you are attaching or removing IV tubing or syringes.</li> <li>• Make sure the cap is firmly attached to the PICC when you complete your IV medication.</li> <li>• Tape PICC/IV tubing to skin.</li> </ul>



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