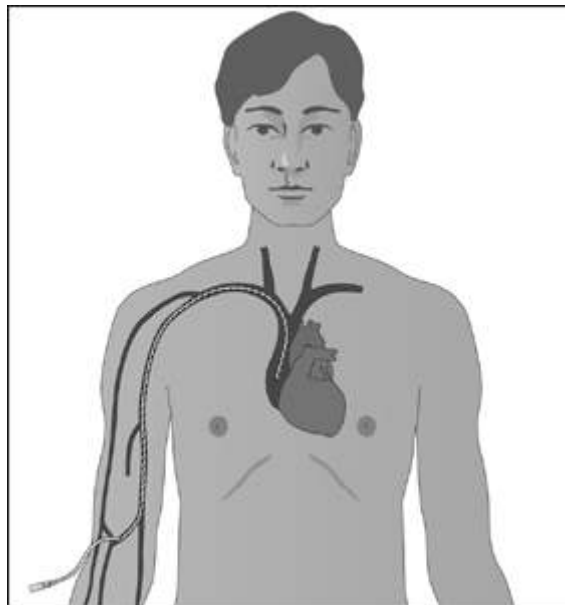


Management of a PICC line (Peripherally inserted central catheter)

A PICC is a long, thin, flexible tube known as a catheter. It is inserted into one of the large veins of the arm near the bend of the elbow or in your upper arm. It is then pushed into the vein until the tip sits in a large vein just above the heart.

The blood flow in this area is very high and dilutes the concentrated IV formula so as to prevent damage to the vein wall. It can stay in place for a long period of time because it does not irritate the body.



The tube is threaded through the vein until the end is near to your heart.

The space in the middle of the tube is called the *lumen*. Sometimes the tube has 2 lumens. This allows different treatments to be given at the same time. At the end of the tube outside the body, each lumen has a special cap to which a IV line or syringe can be attached. There is also a clamp to keep the tube closed when it is not in use.



What they are used for

The PICC line can be used to infuse TPN, antibiotics, chemotherapy, fluids or pain medication. It can also be used to take samples of your blood for testing. You may have the PICC in for weeks or months. This makes it possible for you to have your treatment without having to have needles frequently inserted into your veins. This may be particularly helpful if your veins are hard to find or have been hardened by previous treatment.

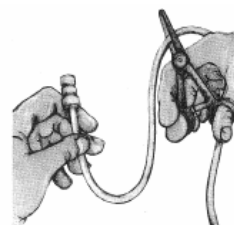
Care of your PICC line

Whether the catheter is used for intermittent or continuous therapy, your nurse will instruct you how to flush your PICC, how often (generally every 12 hours) and with what volume and type of solution to prevent it from clotting (saline and/or heparin).

Always swab the end cap with alcohol before flushing or attaching tubing. The SASH protocol is normally followed for flushing (saline, administer, saline, heparin). Heparin may be omitted depending on the type of PICC you have (PASV).

Needless syringes can be disposed of in the regular trash. Syringes with needles or blood must be placed in a sharps. A clamp is provided on the end of the catheter. Always clamp the catheter when not infusing medication to prevent blood backflow. The clamp may be removed only with certain types of PICCs (Groshong or PASV).

Pulling, bending or kinking the catheter may harm the catheter. You have been given a special catheter clamp to be use if the catheter develops a leak or breaks.



The dressing will also need to be changed each week to reduce the risk of infection.

While the PICC is in place the patient can maintain most usual activities. Swimming, heavy lifting (over 10 lbs.) and upper body exercise must be avoided. The arm must be wrapped in plastic and secured at both ends for showering.



Possible problems signs and symptoms to report to your nurse:

- Swelling or tenderness in the arm or neck above PICC site
- Temperature above 100.5 F, chills
- Difficulty of inability to flush catheter
- Pain at site during or after infusion
- Redness/streaking at or above IV site
- Significant bleeding, leaking or drainage at IV site
- Loose or lifting dressings
- Rash, itching or hives

Sharp objects such as scissors or pins should never be used near your PICC.



If it is hard to flush the catheter, check for closed clamps or kinks and try again. **Do not push hard** as this may damage the catheter. Call your nurse for assistance.

The PICC dressing change is a sterile procedure and should be done weekly by the nurse.

The extension tubing and end cap will be changed weekly at the same time.

If the edges of your dressing lift you can reinforce the dressing with a piece of tape. If the dressing is lifting to the point where the catheter is exposed call your nurse right away and request a dressing change.

Slight bleeding or scabbing at the insertion site is considered normal and the dressing only needs to be changed weekly or if the bleeding is larger than the size of a quarter.

More frequent dressing changes are normally not necessary or recommended as the least amount of exposure to outside bacteria is a way to prevent infection.

While flushing or attaching tubing make sure you use good hand washing technique and keep the tips of syringes and tubings sterile. If in doubt, throw it out.

