Caring for Your PICC at Home

Follow these guidelines after you get home from the hospital. Your clinic or home care nurse will give you more details about your PICC (peripherally inserted central catheter). If you have any questions or concerns, call your clinic or home care nurse.

☐ **If your PICC is more than 24 hours old,** your home care nurse will change your bandage once or twice a week.

☐ **If your PICC is less than 24 hours old,** your home care nurse will change your bandage:

☐ within 24 to 48 hours ☐ in one week

- Some bleeding under the bandage is normal. But if blood leaks out from the clear bandage, don't remove the bandage. Instead, put pressure on the bleeding with a piece of gauze. Then, call your home care nurse.

- To prevent or relieve pain, use a moist heat-pack four times a day.

  1. Place a hand towel under warm running water. Don't make the water too hot—you should be able to hold your hand under it.

  2. Wring out the towel. Gently shake out any hot spots.

  3. Place the towel above the bandage on the upper arm. Do not get your bandage wet.

  4. Place a piece of plastic wrap over the towel. This will help keep the towel warm longer.

  5. Re-wet with warm water as needed. Keep it on your arm for 15 to 20 minutes.

General instructions

- Avoid heavy lifting and contact sports.

- Wear loose clothing on the arm with the PICC.

- Secure the PICC so it doesn't get caught on your clothing.

- If you have your blood pressure taken, **do not** have it taken on your PICC arm.

- Don't use sharp objects around your PICC line.

- Always follow your nurse's directions for flushing the line.

- If your PICC has a clamp, it should be closed unless you are using the PICC.

- Always have your emergency clamp with you.

- Store caps and supplies in a clean, dry place.

Preventing infection

Infection may occur if germs enter where the cap connects to your PICC or the site where the PICC goes into your body.

To prevent an infection:

- Wash your hands well before touching your PICC or any medical supplies. Use liquid soap and water.

- Make sure the bandage is always clean, dry and sticking well to your skin. If it is not, call your home care nurse or clinic.

- If you are going to take a shower, cover the bandage with plastic wrap. Wrap the plastic around your arm over the bandage. Tape the edges well. Keep this arm away from the shower spray.

- Before you connect any tube or syringe, scrub the top of the cap with alcohol. Scrub for 15 seconds.

If problems occur

If a cap comes off:

1. Close the clamp if there is one.
2. Clean the end of the PICC with alcohol for 15 seconds.
3. Put on a new cap and call your nurse at once.

If your PICC falls out: It is not likely to fall out by accident. If it does:

1. Put firm pressure on the exit site with clean gauze.
2. When the bleeding stops, cover the site with clean gauze and tape.
3. Call your home care nurse.

If the tubing breaks or leaks: Place the emergency clamp between the break and your skin. If you do not have a clamp, fold or pinch off the tubing below the break.

If you have chest pain, shortness of breath or feel faint:

1. Put the emergency clamp on the PICC as close to the skin as possible.
2. Remain calm and call 911. Then, explain your symptoms and state that you have a central line.
3. Lie on your left side.

If you see swelling of skin at the site or feel pain, heat, burning or cold:

1. Call your nurse or doctor. Follow their instructions.
2. Do not use the PICC to give fluids.

Call your home care nurse if:

- If you have a tight feeling in your arm or neck on the side of the PICC.

- You see signs of infection (the skin is red, swollen, tender or draining).

- The vein in your upper arm feels firm, like a cord.

- The temperature under your tongue is 100°F (37.8°C) or higher.

- A cap falls off.

- Your PICC breaks, leaks or falls out.

- Your tubing seems longer or shorter.

Please show this to your home care nurse:

At discharge: External catheter _____
Tip placement _____
Arm circumference _____
Type (valved or not) _____

Date/Time _____

Instructor _____, RN