

## Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

A Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC) is a long, flexible tube (catheter) that is usually placed in one of the large veins in the arm. The tube is threaded into a large vein above the right side of the heart. A PICC is part of a group of devices called central venous access devices (CVADs), used to deliver intravenous medication or fluids. Implantable ports (infusaports) are another type of CVAD.

### Why Are PICC Lines Used?

A PICC can be left in place for weeks or months which means fewer needles and less pain. A chest x-ray or ultrasound is used to confirm it is correctly placed. In younger children a General Anaesthetic is used. Older children may have the procedure done under sedation while awake. Adults generally have the procedure done using ultrasound guidance. It may take up to an hour.

### General Care of PICC Line

- You will be able to use your arm normally.
- Keep dressing dry and change every seven days, or sooner, if it starts to lift
- Take care not to pull the line out. No rough or contact sports
- To prevent damage, do not use pins, sharp clamps or scissors near the line
- Swimming or submersion is not allowed
- Cover the dressing with plastic when showering



### Removal of PICC Line

They may stay in for several weeks or months. The line can be removed without an anaesthetic. The stitches are removed, and the catheter slowly pulled out.

### Risks Associated With a PICC

#### Infection

The area must be kept clean and covered with a dry waterproof dressing. This is important to prevent infection. Hands should be washed before handling the line.

Common signs and symptoms of infection are pain, redness, warmth or discharge from the insertion site; shivers, chills, fever (with or without fatigue) and loss of appetite. Seek medical attention if you have these symptoms.

### **Thrombosis (blood clot)**

A PICC can rub against the vein wall and lead to development of a thrombosis (blood clot) in the vein. Signs and symptoms of a clot are pain along the vein of insertion (neck, arm); swelling of the neck, face or arm; change in skin colour and temperature. If you have these symptoms go to your nearest emergency department.

### **Bleeding**

If you experience bleeding at the catheter site, press firmly at the site as you would do after a blood test. The bleeding should stop after a few minutes.

### **Phlebitis (redness along the arm)**

Sometimes the PICC line irritates the inside of the vein wall and results in swelling, redness and pain. This is the body's response to a foreign material. The symptoms should subside within a few days.

### **Catheter Tip Movement**

Occasionally excessive coughing, sneezing or hiccupping may trigger movement of the catheter tip within the body. Signs and symptoms may include pain in the shoulder, jaw, ear or neck.

### **Breakage or Accidental Removal**

Excessive pulling or accidental severage (teeth/scissors) can damage the PICC. If a split occurs, clamp the catheter close to the skin or bend catheter over and cover with waterproof tape. Do not lift catheter above the heart if there is a split in the line. Contact your CF or IV access team or go to the emergency department.

### **How to Prevent Damage**

- Ensure the catheter is secure with the dressing.
- Change dressing if it is lifting.
- Keep infusion lines off the floor when administering medications to avoid

tripping.

- Supervising use of scissors closely.

### **Useful Resources**

- [PICC \(Perth Children's Hospital\)](#)
- [CFWA Factsheets](#)

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