

Peripherally Inserted Central Venous Catheter (PICC)



UHN

Information for Patients about a Peripherally Inserted Central Venous Catheter

What is a PICC?

A PICC is a long, flexible tube placed into a vein in your arm. One end of the tube goes inside your body. The other end stays on the outside. Medication or fluids are given through the end of the tube.

Why do I need a PICC?

You need a PICC to get fluid and/or medication into your body through your vein. A PICC line is used when you need intravenous therapy for longer than 1 or 2 weeks. With a PICC line, you don't need a needle every time you get your medication or fluids.

How long does the PICC stay in?

The PICC can be left in for many weeks or months. Your doctor will tell you how long you need your PICC.

How do I get ready for my PICC?

- Have your blood taken a few days before if your doctor asks you to.
- Eat your normal food and drink.
- At the hospital, we will give you a blue hospital gown to wear. You may wear whatever you wish below the waist.

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How is the PICC put in?

The radiologist (doctor) or certified nurse will explain what is going to happen and will ask you to sign a consent form, which means you agree to have the PICC line. Please ask the doctor or nurse if you have questions.

They will take you to the procedure room and move you onto the table. The doctor or nurse will give you medication to freeze the area on your arm.

The PICC will be put into a vein above your elbow. The vein is poked with a needle. A wire is used to guide the catheter into the vein. A dressing protects the area where the PICC goes into your skin. You may feel some pain when the freezing wears off. This may last 1 or 2 days.

It will take about 30 to 45 minutes to put in the PICC.

What should I do when I get home?

- Rest.
- NO high-energy activities for the rest of the day.
- Eat your normal food and drink.
- Take Tylenol® or another non-Aspirin® pain reliever if you have pain. Follow the directions on the bottle.
- Make sure that the PICC is firmly taped to your skin.

How do I care for my PICC?

Your home care nurse will give you your medication and change your dressing. If you wish, your nurse can teach you or a family member how to change your dressing and flush your PICC.

- Always keep a dressing on the site where the PICC goes into your arm.
- Keep the site and the dressing dry.
- Tape plastic wrap or a plastic bag over the dressing when you take a shower or bath.

What problems should I check for?

Problem	What happens?	How do I prevent this?	What do I do?
Skin infection	Your skin will be red, sore, or swollen around the PICC.	Keep the dressing dry. Always wash your hands before touching the PICC.	Call your doctor or nurse.
Swelling of your vein	Your arm will be swollen, stiff, or sore.		Call your doctor right away.
PICC is slipping out	Your PICC is part way or all the way out of your vein.	Make sure your dressing is not loose. Do not put any tension on the tubing.	Call your doctor or nurse. Put pressure on the site for 5 minutes if the PICC has come all the way out.
Blood clot	Your hand, arm, or neck will swell.		Call your doctor or nurse right away.

How is my PICC taken out?

Your PICC can be taken out at your doctor's office.

Who do I call if I have a question?

If you have a question about your PICC, you can call

- your doctor,
- your nurse, or
- the hospital _____

Notes

Please visit our Web site for more information:

www.uhnpatienteducation.ca