



Caring for Your Peripherally Inserted

You are going home with a peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC). This small, soft tube has been placed in a vein in your arm. It is often used when treatment requires medications or nutrition for weeks or months.

At home, you need to:



Take care of your PICC to keep it working.

Prevent infection by taking extra care washing your hands and preventing the spread of germs.



This sheet will help you remember what to do to care for your PICC at home.

Understanding Your Role



The nurse will teach you and your caregivers how to care for the PICC before leaving the hospital.

Make sure you understand what to do at home, how long you may need the PICC, and when to have a follow-up visit.

The nurse will visit you daily to change the infusion bag and change the dressing on a weekly basis where applicable.

Protecting The PICC



If the PICC gets damaged, it won't work right and could raise your chance of infection. Call your healthcare team right away if any damage occurs.



To protect the PICC at home:

Prevent infection

- Use good hand hygiene by following the guidelines on this sheet.
- Don't touch the catheter or dressing unless you need to.
- Always clean your hands before and after you come in contact with any part of the PICC.
- Your caregivers, family members, and any visitors should use good hand hygiene, too.

Keep the PICC dry

- The catheter and dressing must stay dry.
- Don't take baths, go swimming, or do other activities that could get the PICC wet.
- Ask your provider about the best way to keep your catheter dry when bathing or showering.
- If the dressing does get wet, call your healthcare team right away for help.

Avoid damage

- Don't use any sharp or pointy objects around the catheter. This includes scissors, pins, knives, razors, or anything else that could puncture or cut it.
- Don't let anything pull or rub on the catheter, such as clothing.

Avoid lowering your chest below your waist

- This includes bending at the waist for actions like tying your shoes. When your chest is positioned below your waist, especially for a long time, the catheter's internal tip could slip out of place in the vein.

Watch for signs of problems

- Pay attention to how much of the catheter sticks out from your skin.
- If this changes at all, let your health care provider know.
- Watch for cracks, leaks, or other damage.
- If the dressing becomes dirty, loose, or wet, change it (if you have been instructed to) or call your health care team right away.

Protecting Your Arm

The arm with the PICC is at risk for developing blood clots (thrombosis). This is a serious complication. To help prevent it:

- As much as possible, use the arm with the PICC in it for normal daily activities. Lack of movement can lead to blood clots, so it's important to move your arm as you normally

would. Your health care team may suggest light arm exercises.

- Avoid activities or exercises that require major use of your arm, such as sports, unless your healthcare provider says it's OK.
- Avoid any activities that cause discomfort in your arm. Talk to your health care team if you have concerns about pain or range of motion.
- Don't lift anything heavier than 4.5 Kg (10 pounds) with the affected arm.
- Drink plenty of water. Staying hydrated helps keep clots from forming.



Prevent Infection with Good Hand Hygiene

A PICC can let germs into your body. This can lead to serious and sometimes deadly infections. To prevent infection, it's very important that you, your caregivers, and others around you use good hand hygiene.

This means washing your hands well with soap and water, and cleaning them with alcohol-based hand gel as directed. Never touch the PICC or dressing without first using one of these methods.

To wash your hands with soap and water:



Wet your hands with warm water. (Avoid hot water, which can cause skin irritation when you wash your hands often).



Apply enough soap to cover the entire surface of your hands, including your fingers.



Rub your hands together vigorously for at least 15 seconds. Make sure to rub the front and back of each hand up to the wrist, your fingers and fingernails, between the fingers, and each thumb.



Rinse your hands with warm water.



Dry your hands completely with a new, unused paper towel. Don't use a cloth towel or other reusable towel. These can harbor germs.



Use the paper towel to turn off the faucet, then throw it away. If you're in a

bathroom, also use a paper towel to open the door instead of touching the handle.

**When you don't have
access to soap and water**



Use alcohol-based hand gel to clean your hands. The gel should have at least 60% alcohol. Follow the instructions on the package. Your healthcare team can answer any questions you have about when to use hand gel, or when it's better to wash with soap and water.

What to Do During Showering?



Use cling wrap.



Wrap your arm with the cling wrap a few times till all dressing are covered.



You can have your shower.



After shower, wipe arm dry before removing cling wrap carefully from your arm.

Where applicable, your infusion device should be hung away from the shower area where it will not be in contact with any water.



When to Seek Medical Care?

Call your provider right away if you have any of the following:

Pain or burning in your shoulder, chest, back, arm, or leg

Fever of 100.4°F (38.0°C) or higher or chills

Signs of infection at the catheter site (pain, redness, drainage, burning, or stinging)

Coughing, wheezing, or shortness of breath

A racing or irregular heartbeat

Muscle stiffness or trouble moving

Tightness in your arm, above the catheter site

Gurgling noises coming from the catheter

The catheter falls out, breaks, cracks, leaks, or has other damage

HOME CARE NURSE 24HRS ON CALL

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Home Care Allied Health Department

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