

Central Venous Access

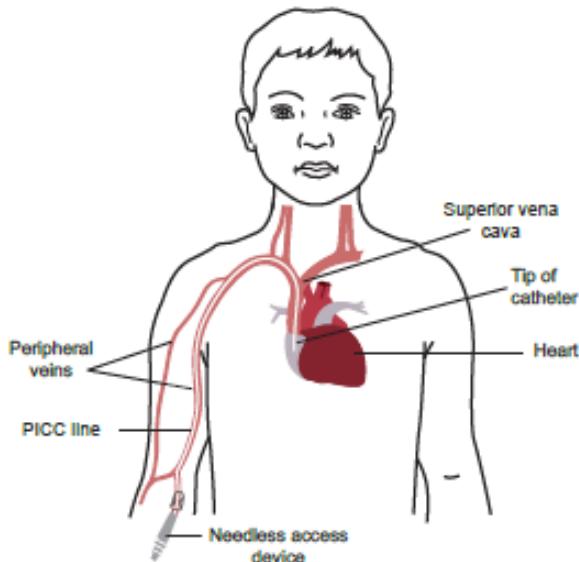
Care of Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

What is a PICC?

A PICC (Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter) is a long, narrow tube (catheter) that is inserted into a large vein to allow for intravenous (IV) medications or fluids to be given. A PICC can be left in place for weeks or months depending on the treatment. It is usually removed as soon as the treatment is finished.

How is a PICC inserted?

A PICC is usually inserted into a vein in the upper arm with the tip of the catheter threaded into a larger vein closer to the heart. A General Anaesthetic is often needed for young children or those unable to lie still for the PICC to be inserted. For older children who are able to lie still, the PICC can be inserted whilst awake or with a mild sedating medicine. The insertion time can vary; in general, the younger the child, the longer the procedure can take.



Why is a PICC needed?

A PICC is recommended when the IV treatment that your child needs could cause irritation to smaller veins when given repeatedly for a number of weeks or months.

Are there any complications?

The most common problems associated with a PICC are blockage of the catheter; infection and movement of the catheter out of position. Most complications can be avoided with good general care and careful observation. Your nurse or doctor will explain what you can do to help prevent these complications and advise you when to seek help when you are discharged home.

Good general care includes:

- Hand washing – before and after touching or handling the PICC or dressing
- Cleaning the bung, or needless access device, with chlorhexidine antiseptic before and after use.

- Keeping the dressing clean and dry – the dressing, tubing and ends of the PICC should be covered with a waterproof covering when bathing or showering. Do not let the end of the catheter sit in bath water.
- Inspecting the insertion site and skin through the dressing every day and telling your nurse or doctor if the skin appears red, swollen, there is any ooze or discharge, or it is painful.
- The PICC is flushed before and after giving every medicine or fluids to help prevent blockage. It may be necessary to give additional flushes between the planned medicine times.
- Check that the connections and bungs at the end of the PICC are secure. When the PICC is not in use the clamps must be closed. The line clamp should be moved to a different position along the PICC each time it is accessed to prevent it becoming kinked or weakened in the same spot.

Activities

- Avoid the following: contact sports; rough play; swimming/submerging the PICC in water; heavy lifting as this can increase the risk of the PICC becoming damaged or moving out of position.
- Young children should be closely supervised when using scissors or sharp objects to avoid accidental cutting or puncturing of the PICC.
- Young children should be closely supervised to prevent them pulling on the line and causing it to be dislodged.
- Normal arm movements will encourage blood flow but excessive arm movements should be avoided.

When to seek help?

Your nurse or doctor will explain what to look for and what to do if problems occur at home. Contact Hospital in the Home or attend the Emergency Department (ED) if you notice any of the following:

- Your child has a fever or is unusually quiet, irritable or tired / lethargic.
- There is ooze around the insertion site or the skin is red, inflamed or painful.
- There is a break or hole in the PICC – clamp the PICC as close to the insertion site as possible, cover the hole with gauze and tape in place. Attend ED.
- Child complains of aching, swelling or pain in the arm, shoulder or neck. Attend ED as soon as possible.
- If you suspect the PICC is blocked – if unable to flush the PICC (for parents who have been taught to flush) or blood is seen in the line, call HiTH or contact your local nurse or doctor.

If you notice any of
these, clamp the PICC
as close to the
insertion site; lay your
child on left side with
head downwards if
possible.
Call 000
Stay Calm

Call an ambulance if you notice any of the following:

- A sudden change and/or difficulty in breathing, gasping for air
- Your child becomes drowsy, pale or floppy
- Your child complains of chest pains or palpitations

Who to contact?

If you have any concerns about your child or have questions related to your child's PICC please contact:

- HiTH or PAC patients – 6456 2222
- Oncology & Haematology patients – Parent Advice Line 24 hours a day 0410 717 816
- PCH CVAD Nurse – during office hours. Call switchboard on 6456 2222 and ask for CAVD nurse



Government of **Western Australia**
Child and Adolescent Health Service

**This document can be made available in alternative formats
on request for a person with a disability.**

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