Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

A PICC is a long, thin, flexible IV line or catheter. It is placed in a vein in your arm and guided up into a larger vein near your heart. A PICC can have one or more openings called lumens. It may stay in for several weeks or months.

A PICC can be put in when IV medicines or fluids irritate smaller veins in the arms or hands. A PICC can be used to give IV medicines or fluids. Antibiotics, chemotherapy, blood products, IV nutrition and other IV medicines can be given through a PICC. Blood can also be drawn from a PICC for blood tests.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

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How is a PICC placed?

A PICC can be put in by a doctor or specially trained nurse. This can be done in your hospital room or in the radiology department.

- You will need to lay flat and keep your arm straight when the catheter is being placed.
- Your arm will be cleaned and covered with a sterile cloth to prevent infection.
- A numbing medicine is used to decrease discomfort where the PICC will be placed. Numbing medicine is given using a small needle injection into the top layers of your skin.
- The PICC will be placed into a vein in your arm with a special type of needle. An ultrasound machine may be used to see the veins in your arm.
- Once the PICC is placed in the vein, it is guided up into a larger vein near your heart.
- You may be asked you to turn your head or move your arm and wrist. This helps the PICC move through the vein to the correct position.
- After the PICC is in place, it is secured with an anchor device and a sterile dressing will be put on the area.
- A chest x-ray may be done to check the position of the PICC.

Activity Limits with Your PICC

After the PICC is placed, you will need to limit some of your activities:

- **Do not** do activities with repetitive motion such as golfing, tennis or pushing a vacuum that could cause the catheter to move.
- You may take showers with the catheter in place. **Cover the PICC catheter site with plastic wrap and tape it down. This keeps the dressing and the area dry.**
- **Do not** swim or do activities that can cause your arm with the PICC to be in water. This will loosen the PICC dressing and increase the risk for infection.
PICC Care at Home

- Your PICC will need special care to keep it clean and working well. This includes: changing the dressing, flushing the lumen(s) and changing the lumen(s) cap.

- Because the PICC is in your arm, you will not be able to do the special care needed for your PICC. PICC care may be done by your caregiver or nurse. Your nurse will work with you and your family to teach you how to care for the PICC.

Call your doctor or home health nurse if you have:

- Increased bruising, swelling or tenderness
- Increased redness at the site where the PICC was placed
- Chills or fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher
- Warmth or drainage / leaking from your PICC site
- Any other problems with your PICC