



Caring for your Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

Information for patients who have had a PICC inserted

You have been fitted with a PICC as part of your treatment plan. The PICC is held in place by steri-strips and an adhesive dressing. It is important that your PICC receives regular care and attention to ensure that it works well and that infection does not occur.

The PICC dressing needs to be changed once a week and this will normally be done by the nurses at the hospital, or your Community nurse.

To help prevent infection, it is important to keep your skin generally clean. If you can, you should have a daily bath, shower or wash. **You can get the dressing wet** – it is waterproof, but you should not submerge your arm or the line under the water for any length of time.

You should be alert to the situations listed below and you should inform the hospital immediately if you are affected by any of them:

- Bleeding from around the line
- Any discharge or pus from around the line
- Any pain, swelling or redness around the line
- The line seems longer than usual
- Any fluid leaks from the end of the line
- Swollen arm or neck on the side of the body the line is in
- Pain in the arm on the side the PICC line is in
- High temperatures or shivering attacks
- Palpitations

Immediate after care

You will have an absorbent dressing over the PICC insertion site for the first 24 hours, after which the nurse will clean the site and renew the dressing.

- It is important that you keep your PICC clean and watch for any signs of infection whilst at home
- The nurse responsible for your care will arrange for your PICC to be redressed the day after it is inserted
- Following this, the dressing need only be changed once a week, as long as it remains clean and intact
- It is important to allow yourself time each day to check your PICC.

How to clean the PICC and change the dressing

- Gather together:
A dressing pack, Chlorhexidine 2% Cleaning Fluid (disposable single use wand), Steri-strips, transparent dressing, statlock device (catheter holder)
- Wash your hands with soap and water and dry well, open the dressing pack
- Open the dressings and Chlorhexidine 2% disposable single use wand on to the sterile area, taking care not to touch them
- Carefully remove the old dressing and steri-strips, taking care not to pull the PICC
- Check the PICC has no splits and that the skin around the line is not swollen, red, hot or painful to touch
- Check that the line is no longer than normal which would indicate the PICC had moved
- Wash your hands and put on sterile gloves
- Use the Chlorhexidine cleaning swab as you have been shown and carefully wipe the skin around the line exit site. Clean the whole area for 30 seconds
- Allow the area to dry for 30 seconds
- Apply the steri-strips
- Apply the new dressing and statlock device
- Wash your hands and clear away the equipment. Any used materials should be placed in the dustbin

Flushing your PICC

- Your PICC must be flushed at least once a week, depending on how often it is being used for treatment
- Your PICC will have a bung (sometimes called a hub) on the end of it. There are two types of bung – a needle-free bung or a blind hub. The nurse will explain the difference. The bung should be replaced with a new one every week when the line is flushed
- If your line is only to be accessed once a week, you should use a sterile, single-use white cap to seal the end of the line

- If your line is to be accessed more frequently, you may have a needle-free bung attached to the end
- It is vitally important that the whole flushing procedure is carried out without introducing infection into the line. Therefore always wash your hands thoroughly before commencing the flush and never touch any part of the equipment that will be inserted into the end of your line
- Gather together the following equipment:

A small tray, a sterile dressing pack, 3 x 10 mL syringes, 10mL 0.9% sodium chloride, heparin sodium 50 units/5 mL, an individual 2% Chlorhexidine wipe, 2x green needles, a sterile bung.

- Prepare a clean area and wash and dry the tray on which you will put the equipment. Then wash your hands with soap and water and dry thoroughly
- Clamp the line
- Open the sterile dressing pack and turn out onto the clean tray. Open the packaging out fully, taking care not to touch the contents of the dressing pack, to create a sterile area
- Open the Individual 2% Chlorhexidine wipe and drop onto the sterile area
- Open the syringe packets and drop the syringes onto the dressing pack without touching it. Then open the needles and white bung and drop onto the dressing pack in the same way
- Check that the heparin sodium 50 units/5 mL is the correct solution and that it is not out of date. Using a piece of gauze or the syringe packaging to protect your fingers, break open the vial as you have been shown by your nurse, and then place on the tray
- Check that the 0.9% sodium chloride is the correct solution and that it is not out of date. Open the vial as you have been shown by your nurse, and then place on the tray
- Place the sterile towel under the line taking care not to touch the centre of the towel where the line rests
- Put on the sterile gloves
- Connect the needle to the syringe without touching the two parts that join. Holding the syringe, move the plunger up and down to loosen it and then place on the dressing pack
- Remove the sheath from the needle and, taking care not to touch the needle, insert it into the open vial of heparin sodium 50 units/5mL. Using both hands, draw up the solution and then expel any air from the syringe and needle. Remove the needle from the syringe and place the syringe back on the dressing pack
- Repeat the above with the 0.9% sodium chloride solution

- Take a piece of sterile gauze from the pack and use it to protect your gloved hand and remove the white bung from the end of your line. Discard the gauze and bung without touching anything un-sterile
- Thoroughly wipe the open end of the PICC with the individual 2% Chlorhexidine wipe for 30 seconds and, holding the line, allow it to dry for 30 seconds
- Insert an empty syringe into the end of the syringe (or needle-free bung if in place) using a gentle twisting action to ensure a good connection. **Do not insert needle**
- Gently pull the plunger until blood is drawn up into the syringe. When you have withdrawn 5mls of blood into the syringe, close the clamp and remove the syringe
- Insert the 0.9% sodium chloride filled syringe into the end of the syringe (or needle free bung if in place) using a gentle twisting action to ensure a good connection. **Do not insert needle**
- Open the clamp on your PICC and commence the flushing procedure as you have been taught in hospital. Use the push-pause technique of flushing over about half a minute as you have been shown in hospital. Close the clamp and remove the syringe
- Close the clamp on the PICC as you are nearing the end of the flush, then withdraw the syringe from the line
- Insert the heparin sodium 50 units/5 mL filled syringe into the end of the syringe (or needle free bung if in place) and repeat the flushing procedure and close the clamp on the PICC as you are nearing the end of the flush
- If no needle free bung in place, attach the new sterile bung on the end of the PICC using a twisting action to secure it in place
- Carefully dispose of the syringes, needles and glass vial in the sharps bin provided. Dispose of the used dressing pack in the bin
- Do not be tempted to use an old syringe, needle or bung as you will introduce infection into the line. Always use new equipment each time you flush the line

Removal of the PICC

Once you have finished your treatment or if your line needs removing because of other reasons, the nurse will remove your PICC. After hand washing and putting on sterile gloves, the nurse will gently, yet steadily, pull the line out. The nurse will then press on the area where the PICC was for about a minute to prevent bleeding. A sterile dressing will be applied to the area. You are advised to keep the area dry for 24 hours in case of bleeding.

If you experience any difficulty with your PICC as outlined on page 1 of this leaflet or feel undue resistance when attempting to flush the line, please contact the hospital immediately for advice. **DO NOT** attempt to force the flush if you feel undue resistance.

Who to contact

In the event of a problem with your PICC, please contact the hospital department as detailed below:

Ward: Telephone:

About this leaflet

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If you have feedback regarding the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, or if you would like a list of references used to develop this leaflet, please email pals@dchft.nhs.uk



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