

The insertion procedure is similar to a usual IV insertion, except it is done using a strict sterile technique. Your nurse will wear a mask, gown, and gloves. The nurse will measure the length of your arm to the area above your heart and cut your catheter to the correct length. Your skin will be carefully cleaned at the place where the PICC will be inserted. The nurse will insert a special needle through the skin, and into your vein. You can expect some discomfort when the needle is first inserted. The catheter will be threaded through this needle. A portion of the catheter will remain outside your body. The nurse may use a numbing medicine to prevent discomfort during the procedure. The catheter will be taped in place, and a sterile bandage placed over the site. An x-ray will be done to be sure the catheter is in the right place. The PICC will not be used until a doctor makes sure that it is properly positioned.

What will happen after the insertion?

While you are in the hospital, your nurse will care for your catheter. Sometimes you may have some slight tenderness, swelling or redness of the upper arm where your PICC was inserted. Report this to your nurse so it can be monitored. This reaction is most common in the first week after insertion. To minimize these reactions, your nurse may instruct you to do light arm exercises, apply warm compresses and give you pain relievers your doctor has ordered.

Robert Packer Hospital
Infusion Services
Guthrie Square
Sayre, PA 18840
570-882-4667, or 800-836-1925
***A member of the Guthrie
Healthcare System***

PE-668



Peripherally Inserted Central Catheters (PICC line)

Information for Patients and Families

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Guthrie Square
Sayre, PA 18840
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What is a PICC line?

PICC stands for **P**eripherally **I**nserted **C**entral **C**atheter.

A PICC is a special intravenous (IV) catheter placed in a vein. The PICC is designed to be inserted into a small vein in your arm and threaded into a larger vein in your chest. The catheter is made of thin, soft, medical-grade plastic or silicon. A special valve in the connector stays closed, except when giving medications or withdrawing blood.

Why do I need a PICC?

What are the benefits?

PICC's are inserted in patients who need IV infusions over a period of time. PICC lines can remain in place much longer than a regular IV and reduce the chance of dislodgement or irritation of the vein.

PICC lines are beneficial when the medicines or fluids are irritating to the wall of the vein.

PICC lines can be used for drawing blood for laboratory tests, eliminating the need for frequent needle pokes and preventing arm veins from becoming badly scarred.

PICC lines can be used immediately after insertion, can remain in place for weeks, months or years, and are easily removed when no longer needed.

PICC lines can be used for fluids, antibiotics, IV feedings, blood products and chemotherapy.

What are the risks?

As with most procedures, there is a small risk of complications. These may include:

- **Bleeding:** Any procedure carries a risk of bleeding. You will be evaluated to determine if your blood clots normally
- **Infection:** An infection may develop at the insertion site; this can be treated with antibiotics
- **Abnormal heart rhythm:** The heart rhythm may be disturbed temporarily while placing the catheter, and is eliminated by adjusting the catheter position.
- **Arterial puncture:** Rarely, the catheter will enter an artery rather than a vein. The catheter will be removed and a pressure bandage applied.
- **Nerve damage:** During insertion, the needle may touch the nerve bundle in your arm causing discomfort or numbness and tingling in your arm and hand. This usually resolves with time.
- **Catheter malposition:** The catheter may enter a vein that is not appropriate. If this happens, the catheter will be repositioned.

After the catheter has been in place for a while complications may occur, such as

- **Infection:** The risk of infection can be minimized by washing hands before touching the catheter and inspecting the site each time the dressing is changed.
- **Catheter fracture:** A hole or break in the catheter may cause leaking. The catheter will be replaced.

- **Dislodgement:** If the catheter is not secured properly, it may be pulled out of position. The catheter will be replaced.
- **Air in the catheter:** This is avoided by learning and using proper techniques and equipment.
- **Catheter occlusion:** This is avoided by learning and using proper techniques and equipment.
- **Vein occlusion:** **Phlebitis** (occlusion from inflammation) is treated with rest, warm compresses and pain relievers recommended by your doctor. Occasionally the catheter will need to be removed.
- **Vein occlusion:** **Thrombosis** (occlusion from clot formation) is managed by catheter removal. Occasionally a 'clot buster' medication will be used.

What alternatives do I have?

Your doctor will discuss this with you.

Other options include:

- Continued peripheral IV's
- Catheter placement by a radiologist under fluoroscopic guidance
- Surgical placement of a catheter into a vein in your neck or chest.

How is a PICC placed?

A PICC may be placed in either arm, and advanced into the vein just above the heart. A PICC is placed by a registered nurse who is specially trained in the procedure.

Not all patients are suitable for a PICC, so your nurse will assess you before one is inserted.

How is the line removed ?

When your doctor determines that you no longer need your PICC line, it can be easily removed by your nurse.

There is no discomfort associated with removal, other than removing the tape, bandage and stitches if any were placed.

- The bandage will be loosened and removed and the line will be gently pulled out.
- Your nurse will measure the line to be sure that it has been removed completely.
- A bandage containing an antibiotic or antimicrobial ointment will be placed over the place where the line was removed. You should leave this on for 24 hours.
- Sometimes your arm may be sore after the line is removed. This can be managed with rest, warm compresses and pain relievers recommended by your doctor.
- Call your doctor or your nurse if there is any discharge from the area where the line was placed, or if you have a fever or chills.

•Very rarely, the line may be difficult to remove. This happens because your vein tightens up around the catheter. If this occurs, it is very important that your PICC line is removed completely and not forced, so your nurse may wait for your vein to relax before trying to remove the line again. It may take several hours for this to occur.

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Caring for your PICC line

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A PICC is a special intravenous (IV) catheter made of a thin, soft, medical-grade plastic or silicon and placed in a vein. This catheter is used to administer fluids, medications, or blood products into your bloodstream.

PICC lines can remain in place for weeks, months or even years.

Compared to a regular intravenous catheter, a PICC lines are more durable and do not easily get blocked or infected

What will happen after the insertion?

While you are in the hospital, your nurse will care for your catheter.

Your dressing **MUST** be changed 24 hours after it is inserted, and should be changed at least once a week after that.

If you go home with your PICC catheter, your nurse will tell you how to care for it.

Your PICC line should be monitored weekly by your physician or nurse.

Tell your nurse if your dressing becomes soiled, loose or wet.

Tell your nurse if the skin around your catheter becomes red and painful.

Sometimes you may have some slight tenderness, swelling or redness of the upper arm where your PICC was inserted. This reaction is most common in the first week after insertion, and usually resolves within a day or two. To minimize these reactions, you can do light arm exercises, apply warm compresses and report to your nurse so it can be monitored. Pain medicine may also be helpful at this time if your doctor approves.

How do I know if something is wrong?

Sometimes there are complications. Tell your nurse immediately if you experience:

- fever, chills or a feeling of general unwellness, as this could be the beginning of an infection.
- oozing around the line.
- cracks or leaks in the line
- pain, redness or swelling around the site, or in your arm or neck.
- Dislodging of the line

What precautions should I take at home?

- If your catheter is not being used continuously, it must be flushed regularly to ensure that the line does not become plugged.
- When your dressing is changed, always make sure that it is secured with tape strips under the bandage, so that the line cannot be accidentally pulled out.
- While your PICC line should not interfere with your social or home life, your doctor will advise you of what activities your medical condition will permit.
- You are encouraged to continue all of your usual activities, including travel, sex and sports.
- Strenuous, heavy or repetitive lifting, or vigorous upper body sports or exercise which may dislodge your line are not recommended.
- You may shower with your PICC line. Wrap your arm in a bread bag or plastic wrap to prevent soaking or entanglement.
- Swimming or submerging in bath water is not recommended.
- Always carry your information card with you. Other health care workers may need fast access to your PICC information, including size, length and catheter tip placement.