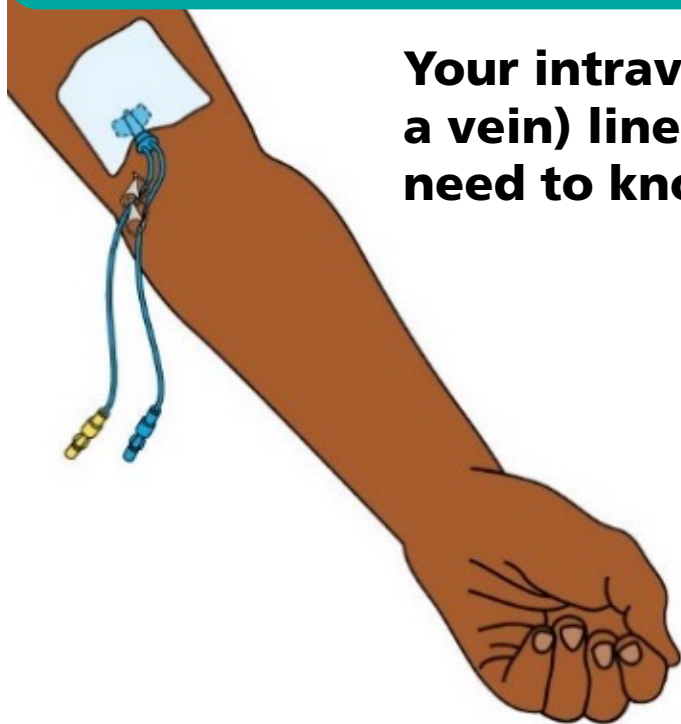


Care of your peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC)

Information for patients

**Your intravenous (into
a vein) line – what you
need to know**



This leaflet answers common questions about caring for your line. If you would like any further information or have any particular worries, please do not hesitate to contact your named nurse or doctor.

What is a PICC?

A PICC is a long flexible tube that is inserted into the veins in the upper arm.

The PICC is threaded along the vein until the tip sits in a large vein near the centre of your chest (near to the entrance of your heart). This type of line is classed as a central venous access device.

What is it used for?

It is designed to deliver treatments such as:

- Antibiotics and other intravenous medications
- Intravenous fluids
- Blood products
- Nutrition

In addition, it can be used to take blood samples from.

Benefits of a PICC:

- Helps preserve other veins.
- Reduces the need for regular venepuncture and cannulation
- Needle-phobic patients benefit from this type of line
- Can remain in place for 12 months plus

How is the PICC put in?

A doctor or specialist nurse will put in your PICC line at the hospital. It can either be done in an outpatient department or on a ward. They will talk with you about which arm would be better to use. They can also answer any questions you may have about the line.

The skin will be cleaned with antiseptic and numbed with local anaesthetic before a vein is located. An ultrasound scanner will help the practitioner choose the best vein to use in your arm. When the skin is completely numb, they will put a needle into the vein and gently thread the PICC through the needle into a large vein that leads to the heart. They then remove the needle.

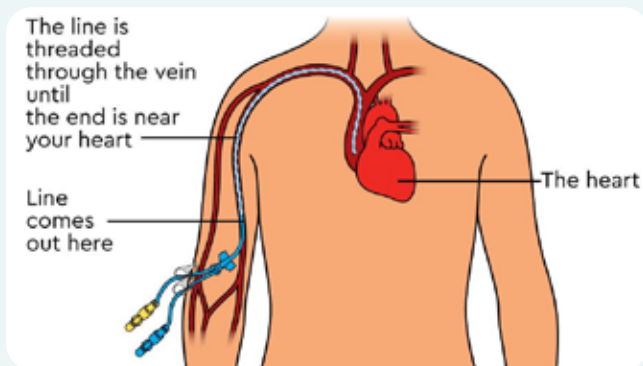
This should not take long and is usually painless. The end of the line comes out above the bend of the elbow and will be held in place by a securement device and a clear dressing under a cotton sleeve.

You may need a chest x-ray to check that the end of the PICC is in the right place.

Please note that once the effects of the local anaesthetic (numbing) has worn off you may feel slight discomfort or an ache at the insertion site (where the line goes into to the upper arm). This is normal, and simple painkillers such as paracetamol can be taken if required. There may be some bruising around the insertion site and some blood on the dressing; this is quite normal and nothing to be worried about.

Possible problems when putting in a PICC

It can sometimes be difficult to thread the PICC up the vein. If there is a problem, it is usually possible to try again using a different vein.



What are the risks?

PICC insertion carries a small risk of complications described below. Your specialist nurse or doctor will explain these to you:

Infection

It is possible for an infection to develop inside the PICC, or at the point of insertion. If you notice redness around the line or a discharge from the entry site, or you have a temperature, fever, chills or feel generally unwell, it could mean you have an infection.

Blood clot

It is possible for a blood clot to develop when a PICC is in place. Pain, swelling or discomfort in your neck or arm on the side of the catheter insertion could be signs of a blood clot.

Malposition

Occasionally the line can become dislodged. If you notice the line that you can see on your arm is longer than usual the position may no longer be correct. A chest x-ray is required to check the catheter tip position. In the unlikely event the line falls out completely you should lie down and apply pressure to the site immediately to stop any bleeding and contact your doctor or nursing team. Never try to reinsert your PICC if it has been partially or completely pulled out.

Bleeding and bruising

Sometimes a small amount of blood may be seen around the insertion site. Gentle pressure may be applied by the practitioner after the procedure to stop the bleeding.

Line becomes cut or punctured

Inform your doctor or nurse immediately. The line will need to be clamped to prevent damage caused by bleeding and by air entering the blood stream.

Blocked line

If the line becomes partially blocked it may be difficult to take blood from it or to give medications through it. Special clot busting drugs can be used to try to preserve the line. In most cases the line should not be used until the problem is dealt with.

Rare complications

Rarely the line can irritate the heart and cause abnormal heart rhythms, if you feel any palpitations, light headedness, dizziness or shortness of breath it is important to seek medical advice.

Caring for your PICC:

- The line is kept in place with a securement device and a dressing.
- If you are an inpatient, the nurses on the ward will provide care and maintenance of your PICC.
- If you are an outpatient discharged under the OPAT (Outpatient Parenteral Antimicrobial Therapy) team they will be responsible for the care and maintenance of your PICC.
- If you are an outpatient not under the OPAT team it is necessary for your PICC to be reviewed once a week. An appointment will be made for you on MDCU (Medical Day Case Unit) so it can be cared for, or you will be seen on WTC (Welcome Treatment Centre).

Please make sure you have the contact details of the teams responsible for your PICC before you are discharged.

Keep it dry

It is important the dressing always remains clean and dry. The semi-transparent dressing is water resistant but not waterproof. It is fine to shower, but ensure it is covered well with a waterproof sleeve (these will be provided at the time of the insertion) and not in the direct line of the water. If you prefer a bath, make sure the arm with the PICC in place is kept out of the water and ensure a waterproof sleeve is also worn. Keeping the area dry will help prevent infection.

IMPORTANT:

Never open any clamps or remove any end caps.

Avoid sharp objects near your line.

Using your line

The end of the line (on the outside) must be thoroughly cleaned with an antiseptic wipe before it is used. Each lumen of your line must be flushed after use to prevent it from blocking. The dressing and bungs should be changed weekly. Anyone using your line should be trained to do so.

Dressing changes, bung changes, delivering medications or withdrawing bloods are all sterile procedures. Report to your team if you feel unwell during or immediately after the line is used.

Living with your PICC

Can I go swimming?

Swimming is not advised as it will not be possible to keep the area completely dry and there is a high risk of infection.

Can I go to work?

Having a PICC should not keep you from doing most of your day-to-day activities. You will still be able to go to work or school.

If you do want to continue with work discuss this with your practitioner as there may be some restrictions dependant on the job you do.

Can I have sexual intercourse?

There is no reason why this should be affected by the PICC insertion. To minimise the risk of catching the line please ensure the PICC is secured to your arm and covered with a cotton sleeve.

How is the PICC removed?

When you do not need a PICC anymore, it will be taken out. A nurse will usually do this for you in an outpatient department. The line will be gently pulled out, and the area where the PICC line was put in will be covered with a dressing. This is painless and only takes a few minutes.

Service contact information

If you or your carer have a concern, or simply require more information, help or support, please contact either:

OPAT team on 01623 622515, extension 6145 or 2711.

Office hours are 8am to 8pm, Monday to Sunday.

Or

Medical Day Case Unit at Newark Hospital on 01623 622515, extension 5320.

Office hours are 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Or

Medical Day Case Unit at King's Mill Hospital on 01623 622515, extension 2426.

Office hours are 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday.

Or

Welcome Treatment Centre on 01623 622515, extension 3079.

Office hours are 8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday.

If you require urgent advice or have a concern outside of these hours, please attend your nearest Emergency Department or call 999

Appointment for dressing change

Appointment date: _____

Time: _____

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: [PICC line care](#) | [Royal Marsden Patient Information Library](#)
Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references (if relevant) for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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