



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Peripherally Inserted Central Catheters (PICC lines)

Issued by the Infection Control Department

Introduction

It has been recommended that you have a Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC) inserted, as part of the care you are receiving.

This leaflet aims to provide supporting information about the procedure, and about the future care of your PICC.

What is a PICC?

A PICC is a long hollow tube that is inserted into one of the large veins in your arm. One end of the tube sits in a vein (usually just above the heart) and the other end comes out from underneath the skin in your arm.

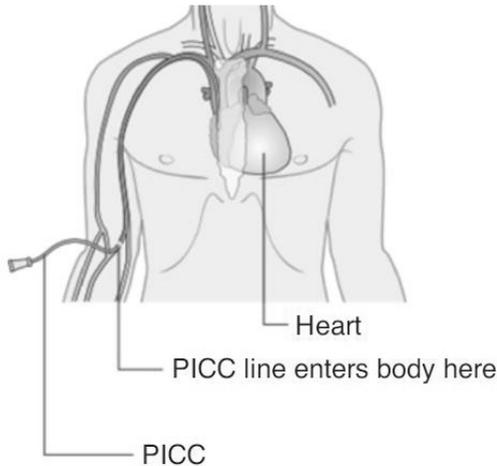


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Why do I need a PICC?

This type of catheter is usually recommended for patients who need certain types of medicines or treatments. Some of these treatments may irritate or damage smaller veins and some may be required over a long period of time.

The reasons you need a PICC will have been discussed with you by your doctors and nurses. You can decide not to have this procedure or to wait until you have had time to think about it, however this may delay your treatment.

How do I prepare for the PICC insertion procedure?

As a patient you need to do very little to prepare for the insertion of the PICC. Your practitioner will discuss the insertion procedure, alternatives and potential problems with you. You will be offered an opportunity to discuss any issues prior to the PICC insertion procedure. You will normally be asked to provide consent for this procedure.

Please inform the practitioner of any allergies that you may have.

What happens when I have the PICC inserted?

You may have a PICC inserted when you are visiting a clinic or you may already be a patient in hospital. The PICC will be inserted in an operating theatre and the procedure should take about 30 minutes. It is not an operation but the person inserting your catheter will treat it as a very clean procedure. They will wear a sterile gown, gloves and prepare sterile equipment. Your skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic, after which sterile towels will be placed over your arm. Local anaesthetic may be used to numb a small area of your skin before the PICC is inserted. Your practitioner will discuss the need for local anaesthetic with you. The PICC is inserted through a needle; the skin is not cut. The needle is removed once the PICC is inserted. Once the PICC is inserted it is fixed in place with a pad and a waterproof dressing.

What happens after the PICC insertion procedure?

Once the PICC has been fixed in place you will need a chest x-ray to make sure it is in the correct position. Once the x-ray has been checked you may begin to receive your treatment. If you have the PICC inserted when you are attending a clinic you will be able to go home following the procedure.

Benefits and alternatives

The key purpose of having a PICC is to allow you to have medication given directly into your veins.

By having a PICC you may also be able to receive this treatment in your own home over an extended period of time where necessary as PICCs may remain in place for many months. If you decide not to have a PICC it would be necessary to insert a needle into your veins every three days. This may be painful for you and could increase the risk of you developing an infection in your blood stream or in the skin where the needle has been inserted.

Potential risks

Infection: the procedure is carried out using a full aseptic technique but there are still risks of the catheter becoming infected. This may be local infection at the skin or a more general bloodstream infection. It is likely that this infection would be treated with antibiotics and occasionally the PICC may have to be removed.

Local bruising or pain at the site of insertion: this usually settles within a few days. You may require some simple pain killers such as Paracetamol.

Narrowing of veins: if you need the PICC for a long period of time the vein may become narrowed. If this happens a new PICC may have to be put into a different vein.

Poor position of the PICC line: the PICC should sit in one end of the major vein near to the heart. However this is not always possible and the PICC may need to be moved or replaced so that it is in the correct position.

Failure to insert: the veins in the arm are sometimes very small and it may not be possible to insert the PICC. If this is the case we will discuss alternative options with you.

Blood clot in the upper arm: having a PICC sitting in a vein does mean there is a risk of causing a blood clot. If this occurs it is preferable to treat the thrombus whilst still using the PICC line.

Split Line: it is very important to prevent the PICC from getting damaged. In the unlikely event that the PICC develops a split or a break, we will usually remove it, although occasionally it is possible for it to be repaired using special equipment.

Caring for your PICC?

In hospital

Nursing staff will look after your PICC. This involves:

- Cleaning the insertion site and PICC line with antiseptic and applying a clean dressing, weekly.
- Changing the fixation device weekly.
- Replacing the bung with a new bung weekly.
- Flushing the line with salt water solution before and after each use. This is required to prevent the tube becoming blocked.

At home

When you leave hospital we will either contact the district nurse who will call to your home and care for your PICC line as we would do in hospital or we will arrange for you to manage your PICC yourself. Before you go home you will have been supplied with equipment and instructions which will enable you to care for your PICC correctly.

In some instances you may be asked to attend a day ward for regular blood checks or treatment, if this is the case, the nurse will also care for your PICC at the same time.

Can I bathe/shower?

You can bathe/shower with a waterproof dressing in place. We ask that you try not to soak the dressing. The PICC should be covered with a waterproof covering such as cling film when taking a shower or bath.

If the dressing is loose after your bath/shower, it should be replaced. Your nurse will show you how to do this. If your PICC is being managed by a District Nurse you should contact them on the number they have given you.

Can I use the arm where the PICC has been inserted?

The arm with the PICC may be used as usual; this will increase blood circulation in that arm which helps medication to spread throughout the body. However, strenuous work, lifting objects greater than ten pounds, or repetitive motion should all be avoided. Never pull on the catheter.

Hand hygiene

Any person caring for your PICC, including yourself, should wash their hands and put on gloves prior to handling it.

Dressing changes

The PICC dressing on your arm should be checked every day by either your nurse if in hospital or by yourself or your carer if you are at home. It must be checked for signs of bleeding and oozing. If the dressing is wet or soiled it should be changed immediately. The dressing should also be changed routinely every seven days even if it appears clean and dry.

If your dressing is wet or soiled and you are caring for your PICC yourself you must contact one of the numbers provided in this booklet.

When and how will my PICC be removed?

PICC's are usually removed at the end of treatment. Rarely, they are removed because of problems. The dressing will be removed and the catheter will be pulled out easily, usually with no discomfort. Then a small dressing will be applied that you can remove after 48 hours.

Any problems?

If your PICC is being managed at home by either yourself or a carer it is important that you contact one of the numbers included within this booklet, to report any irregularities or complications such as swelling, redness, leakage or pain around the PICC insertion site.

If the PICC has partly fallen out, fix it in place with some tape. If the PICC has completely fallen out cover the hole with either a sterile dressing or a clean towel for a few minutes and then apply a small sterile dressing. If it continues to bleed apply pressure for a further three minutes. In all cases you must either contact the advice number below or your District Nurse via the number supplied, immediately.

If the catheter breaks, whether bleeding does or does not occur, do not panic. Using a clean towel apply sufficient pressure at the site, and make sure it remains covered. You should then go to your nearest urgent care centre or minor injury unit.

Additional information

Name of Consultant managing your care:

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Discharging Ward/Department:

.....

Hospital:

.....

Contact numbers for advice:

Ward contact:

District Nurses contact:

Oncology Day Unit:

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

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General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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