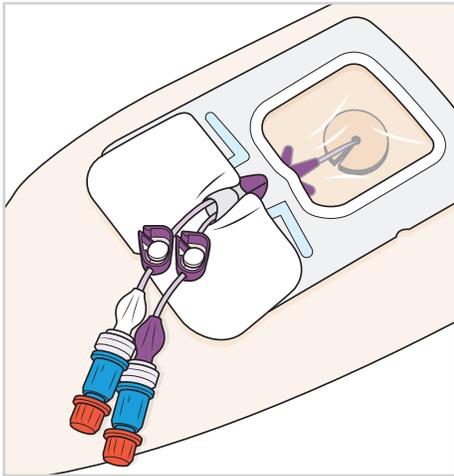


# WHY YOU ARE GETTING A PICC



An order has been placed to administer medication directly into your blood. The nurse will place a tube called a Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter; or called a PICC. Some medications work better if they do not have to go through the stomach as with a pill. Some of these medications can cause problems for small veins, so they need to be delivered in a very large vein—specifically the vein before the heart. It is safe to place a PICC in this vein. There may be other reasons to place a PICC. It is okay to ask if another device can be used. Be sure to ask why a PICC was chosen if concerned.

## What will happen and permission to place device

In order to do this, the nurse will place a small plastic tube through your skin into a vein to administer the medication into your blood. This is a sterile procedure that can be performed right in your room. The nurse needs to ask to do this.

## Where it should go and how the procedure is performed

The nurse will decide with you where the PICC should be placed. It is usually easier to place the PICC in the upper right arm, but it is possible to place on the left or even another vein if needed. If you have kidney disease or if you have had surgery with lymph nodes taken out, please tell the nurse placing your PICC, as these require special precautions. Make sure everyone in your room washes their hands and wears a mask when your PICC is inserted. The nurse will need to clean off the table, then set up a sterile field to hold supplies for placing your PICC.

The PICC must be placed with sterile procedure. This means a drape will be used head to toe much like in the operating room. If claustrophobia is a problem, tell the person placing the PICC because there are some things that can be done to help. Numbing medicine will be used when the PICC is inserted. The PICC will be placed with a needle, then the needle is taken out. When the procedure is finished, a small tube will be left in place. The tip of the tube will be in a very large vein in the chest. We can tell where the tip is by looking at a heart monitor or taking a chest x-ray, or maybe even both. A device will be added to hold the PICC in place. There might also be something added to help prevent infection where the PICC goes through the skin. A dressing will cover all of it.

It is important for the dressing to stay in place. If it comes off your skin, the nurse should not add more tape, the dressing needs to be replaced.

*This document is not intended to treat, diagnose or prescribe. The information is for educational purposes only and is not meant to take the place of a consultation with a licensed healthcare professional.*

## What you can do to help prevent infection

We do not want you to get an infection from the PICC, so we have to be extra careful to take care of it. Anytime a nurse uses your PICC, they should wash their hands. Before anything is attached to the PICC or the tubing, the place where it connects will need to be cleaned very well.

Your PICC must be flushed before medicine is given through it, and again when the medicine is finished. The nurse can do this with a syringe of fluids called a “flush syringe”. It will need to be flushed at least once every day and every night even if no medications are given through the PICC. You might taste or smell something salty or like metal when your PICC is flushed. This is normal and does not cause a problem.

The dressing protects your PICC and helps hold it in place. The dressing should be clean and stay on your skin all the way around. If the dressing is loose or wet, it needs to be changed. The dressing will need to be changed every seven days. When the dressing is changed, everyone in the room should wear a mask. The table will need to be cleaned in order to set up a sterile field. This sterile field will hold supplies to replace your dressing.

## What you should inform your nurses of

If the pump is alarming, the medicine is not going into your blood in the vein as it should. The nurse might not hear the pump alarming. Use your call light to get help to fix the alarm.

Sometimes connections are loose and your PICC might leak. If your PICC is leaking, tell the nurse so it can be fixed.

If you see blood in the tubing, this is not a problem at all, but it will need to be flushed back into the vein

with a flush syringe. If your PICC does not flush or the nurse cannot pull blood from any lumen of your PICC, the PICC is not working correctly. A medication can be put in the PICC that might unplug the line. The PICC must be unplugged or it must be removed.

PICCs should not be painful. If the arm is red, swollen, or warm to the touch or if the skin is tight, your PICC will need to be removed. If your PICC is removed, it is okay to ask if the medication can be taken in by mouth. Sometimes it is fine to switch to medicine by mouth after the first doses are given through a vein.

## After the PICC is out, here's how to care for the site, what to watch for and report

When the last of the medicine is finished, the PICC should be taken out. There is no reason to keep it “just in case” because it can still get infected if left in place. You will need to keep your arm below the level of your heart while your PICC is being removed. After the PICC is out, a dressing should stay on the site for at least 24 hours. If there is pain, or the site is hard, or if you begin to have a fever, it is important for you to tell the nurse or your doctor.

## Where to find accurate information

If you have any questions or concerns it's best to ask your doctor. We want to be certain the information you have is accurate. On the internet, there are places for good information and some incorrect information, be careful to check what you read and hear.

*This document is not intended to treat, diagnose or prescribe. The information is for educational purposes only and is not meant to take the place of a consultation with a licensed healthcare professional.*