

Information for  
patients & families

# Your PICC

## (Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter)



Treatment - Systemic

This page will be completed by the healthcare team that inserted your catheter. Save this information and share it with all your healthcare providers.

Your PICC is measured to fit your body.

The **catheter length** is: \_\_\_\_\_ cm long \_\_\_\_\_ cm in.

Is your catheter a **Power-PICC**? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(Some PICCs are Power-PICCs. A Power-PICC may be used to administer contrast medicine for a CT scan or MRI.)

**Locking solution:** ☐ Heparin ☐ Normal saline ☐ Sodium citrate

**Your line needs to be locked:** ☐ Daily ☐ Every 7 days

**Your caps need to be changed:** ☐ Weekly ☐ Sooner if your healthcare provider thinks it's needed

**Your dressing needs to be changed:** ☐ Weekly ☐ Sooner if your healthcare provider thinks it's needed

**Securement Device:** ☐ Secur A Cath® ☐ Statlock®

**Date catheter was inserted:**

## Your PICC

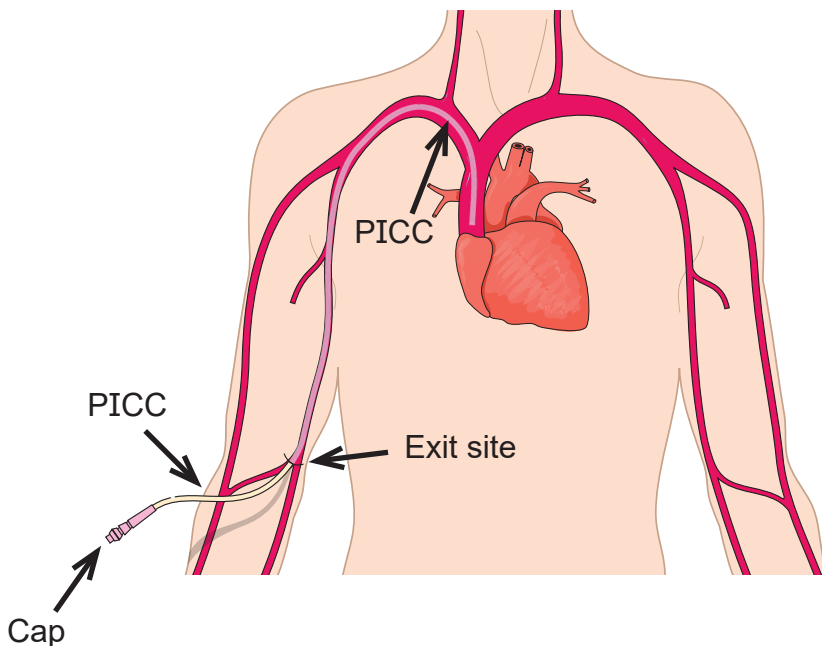
### What is a peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC)?

A PICC is a soft, long tube that is placed into your arm vein. It's then slid through the vein until the tip is just above your heart. A PICC can remain in your vein for a few months.

### Why do I need a PICC?

The PICC makes it possible for you to have many treatments without having to put a needle into your vein each time. It is used to infuse stem cells, draw blood and to give:

- chemotherapy
- medication
- nutrition
- fluids
- blood products



## Caring for your PICC

### To help prevent infections:

- Check your dressing and insertion site every day to make sure there's no infection. **Do not remove your dressing to do this.** It needs to be secure and should not be lifting.
- A healthcare professional will change the dressing 24 hours after your PICC is inserted and then at least every 7 days.



If your dressing gets wet, dirty or loose, call your healthcare team. If this happens after hours, call HealthLink at 811.

- A healthcare professional will change the caps and flush and lock your line every 7 days. This keeps the line clear so it doesn't get clogged, or clotted and it reduces your risk of infection.

### Water and my PICC:

- You may shower while you have your PICC but never put it directly in the water.
- Protect it from the water by putting plastic around your arm like Saran Wrap®.
- If you take a bath, make sure the water is low enough so your PICC does not touch the water.
- Do not use hot tubs, or go swimming.

### Safety tips for your PICC:

- Always wash your hands before you touch your catheter.
- Do not bend, twist, pinch or pull your catheter.
- Never touch the end of the catheter when the cap is off.

- 
- Do not use sharp objects like scissors, knives, or pins, near the catheter or other tubing. They may damage your catheter.
  - If your line has a clamp, keep it clamped when you are not using it.
  - Tape the line to your arm to prevent pulling or dangling.
  - Keep your emergency supplies with you at all times.

### **Things to avoid on your arm that has the PICC:**

- Any pressure
- Clothing that is tight, or that rubs or pulls on the catheter. Wear loose clothing over the PICC. When you get dressed, be careful not to pull on the catheter
- Getting your blood pressure checked
- Pulling or tugging on the line — tape the line close to your body

### **What activities should I avoid while I have a PICC?**

- No heavy lifting (5 lbs or more), strenuous exercise, or contact sports.
- Do not do activities that use your arm muscles. Avoid weight lifting, bowling, golf, and tennis.
- Avoid activities that cause sweating. This may loosen the dressing.
- Keep active but avoid activity where you need to repeat the action over and over again. For example, do not vacuum or shovel.

Be careful if you use crutches, a wheelchair, or a walker. For example, don't let the crutches put pressure in the armpit of your arm that has the PICC. Talk to your healthcare team if you use these types of medical equipment.

## Possible Problems to Watch for

**Blood clots** — Watch for facial swelling, sudden chest pain, shortness of breath, or swelling in the arm that your PICC is in. If you have any of these symptoms, call the contact number your nurse gave you or go to the emergency room. You will get medication to help break down the clot.

Check your arm daily for:

- **PICC moved out of place** — If the length of the PICC seems longer than normal, call your healthcare team right away. At the insertion site, it's important to count how many dots are on the catheter. If you have more or less dots than what you counted for your previous dressing change, you will need to contact the cancer centre. Never try to move the PICC yourself.
- **Skin rash** — check to see that there are no changes to your skin under or around the dressing. If you do see changes, call your healthcare team right away.

### When should I go to the emergency room?

The yellow box on the next page lists when you should go to the emergency room. If you have to go to emergency and get any treatment, let your cancer care team know.

## **When to go to the emergency room:**

If you have any of the symptoms below. **Do not wait** to speak to your cancer healthcare team.

- Confusion
- Shortness of breath
- Dizzy
- A cough that will not go away
- Pain in your chest
- Distended neck veins
- Sudden pain in your jaw, ear or neck
- Difficulty swallowing or turning your head
- Swelling in your chest or neck
- Pale skin, swelling, or numbness in your arm or neck on the same side as your line
- You have a fever or chills with a temperature of 38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher at any time or 38.0°C (100.4°F) to 38.2 (100.8°F) for at least 1 hour.

**Broken or torn PICC** — it is possible to get a hole or tear in the central line tubing. Signs of damage could include:

- Wetness under the dressing or along the tubing
- An area of bulging or bubbling on the central line
- Puffiness or swelling on the skin near the central line
- Tear or hole is visible

If there is damage, tape the catheter to your skin and cover it with a sterile dressing if you can. Go to the emergency room.

**The PICC pulls out all of the way** — put pressure on the site for at least 10 minutes until bleeding stops. Go to the emergency room.

**If the cap comes off** — never touch the end of the catheter. Go to the emergency room.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International license. To view a copy of this licence, see <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>. You are free to copy, distribute and adapt the work for non-commercial purposes, as long as you attribute the work to Cancer Care Alberta, Alberta Health Services and abide by the other licence terms. If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under the same, similar, or compatible licence. The licence does not apply to AHS trademarks, logos or content for which Alberta Health Services is not the copyright owner.

This material is intended for general information only and is provided on an "as is", "where is" basis. Although reasonable efforts were made to confirm the accuracy of the information, Alberta Health Services does not make any representation or warranty, express, implied or statutory, as to the accuracy, reliability, completeness, applicability or fitness for a particular purpose of such information. This material is not a substitute for the advice of a qualified health professional. Alberta Health Services expressly disclaims all liability for the use of these materials, and for any claims, actions, demands or suits arising from such use.

The information is to be updated every 3 years, or as new clinical evidence emerges. If there are any concerns or updates with this information, please email [cancerpatienteducation@ahs.ca](mailto:cancerpatienteducation@ahs.ca).

For other Cancer Care Alberta  
resources, visit  
[cancercarealberta.ca](http://cancercarealberta.ca)

