

Caring For Your Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

What is a PICC?

A PICC is a flexible plastic tube that is placed into a large vein in your arm. The tube extends into the superior vena cava (SVC). The SVC is a very large vein which leads to the heart. This allows your healthcare team to give you medicine, fluids and/or remove blood for laboratory testing.

Why do you need a PICC?

You need a PICC because you require treatment for longer than 5 days. Your PICC line is temporary but can remain in place for an extended period of time.

How to care for your PICC?

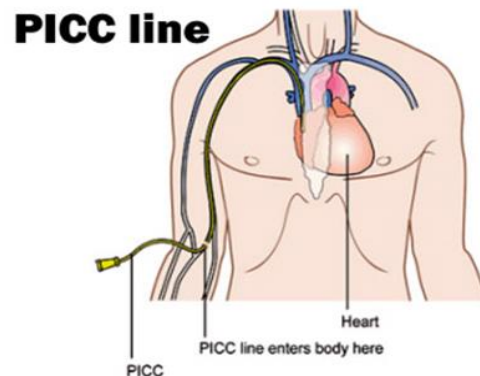
- Keep the dressing clean and dry.
- Cover the dressing with a plastic bag or plastic wrap (Glad® Press'n Seal® Wrap) if there is a chance that it will get wet (showering, washing dishes).
 - Showers, rather than baths are recommended.
- Place surgical tape around the edges of the plastic to keep the PICC and dressing dry (you can purchase surgical tape at a local pharmacy or supermarket).
- Always wash your hands with soap and water before touching the tip of your PICC.
- Loop extra-long tubing and secure it under your garment sleeve to avoid pulling it out by accident.

What should you avoid?

- Pulling on the PICC.
- Activities such as swimming and bathing, as this can expose your PICC to potential infection-causing germs.
- Taking blood pressure readings on the same arm as your PICC.
- Heavy lifting and vigorous activity involving the arm with the PICC.

Directions for flushing your PICC

- A PICC line needs to be flushed daily and before/after each use.
- Always use a new alcohol wipe before cleaning the hub (tip).
- Normal saline or heparin may be used for flushing your PICC. Your healthcare team will give you instructions.
- Your dressing will also need to be changed once a week usually by a trained individual, unless instructed otherwise.



When should you call the healthcare team?

If you notice the following, call Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey at 732-235-2465 immediately:

- Fever of 100.4° F or higher
- Chills
- Swelling
- Redness
- Pain
- Skin that is warm or hot to the touch
- Drainage at the insertion site
- If your PICC comes out, apply pressure with a clean gauze pad (or cloth, tissue, cotton ball, towel). Once it stops bleeding apply a new adhesive dressing.

If you are in need of immediate assistance, please call 732-235-2465 and select the option that best meets your needs.