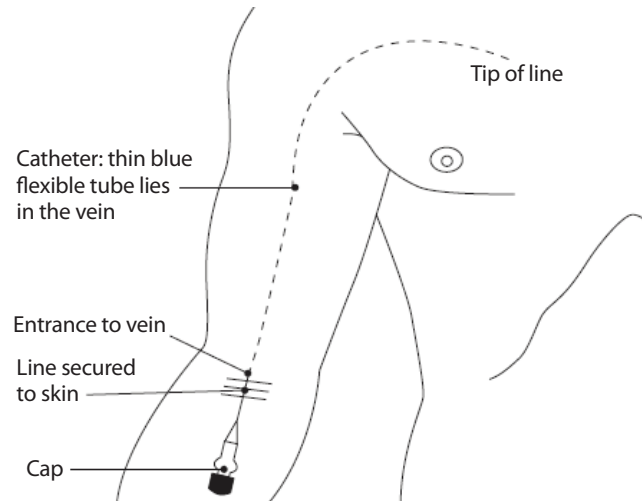


Your Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

Introduction to your PICC

A PICC (or **P**eripherally **I**nserted **C**entral Catheter) is a catheter that is made of soft, pliable material. It is inserted into your arm vein, usually just above or below the inner bend of your elbow, and then threaded up into a larger vein in your chest. A PICC allows you to receive medications that could cause damage if given through one of the smaller veins in your arms. A PICC may also be placed when you need to receive IV therapy for longer than a week.



How is the PICC placed?

A doctor or a specially-trained nurse will place the PICC into your arm. This will occur in the hospital, in an outpatient clinic, your doctor's office, or in your home. Using a needle or a guidewire, the nurse or doctor inserts the PICC into a vein in your arm. From there, the line is threaded into a larger vein near your heart, called the Superior Vena Cava.

Once the catheter is in the correct position, the guide wire or needle is removed, and the PICC is left in place. The catheter site is secured by tape or sutures, and a sterile dressing is placed over the insertion site to protect it. An x-ray will be taken to be sure the catheter is in the right place near your heart. If you had your PICC inserted at home, this means you will need to travel to the doctor's office or other facility that has an x-ray machine. This procedure, while slightly uncomfortable, will not take long to perform, and you should not experience pain after the insertion is completed.

How long can my PICC stay in place?

Your PICC can remain in place for several months. In some cases, PICCs have been in place for up to a year. Your infusion nurse will teach you about signs and symptoms that your PICC may need to be removed. In addition, your infusion nurse will be changing the dressing on your arm at least weekly, and will observe for any complications at the site. In some cases, the nurse may even teach you or your carepartner how to change the dressing on your PICC.

What type of care does the PICC require?

The dressing is changed the day after your PICC is inserted, and at least weekly thereafter. In some cases, the nurse may teach you or your carepartner to change this dressing. The injection cap at the end of your catheter will be changed at least weekly, and more frequently depending on the medication you are receiving and whether your PICC is being used to obtain blood for lab tests. Your nurse will teach you and your carepartner how to flush your PICC after each use and at least every day to keep the PICC line “patent” (open and able to receive medications). You will be taught how to look for signs and symptoms of infection or complications that you will need to report to your nurse.

What precautions should I take with my PICC?

The catheter site in your arm must be kept dry. You may bathe or shower as long as the site is protected with a water-resistant covering. More information about protecting your PICC dressing can be found on the last page of this document. You will need to check your site every day for signs of infection or vein irritation such as redness, swelling or pain.

What problems can I have with my PICC?

The next page is a list of potential problems that can occur with a PICC. Also included are the actions you should take if any occur, and how to avoid the problem.

How to Identify and Care for Potential Problems with Your PICC

Possible Problem	Signals to Watch For	What to Do and How to Avoid the Problem
Phlebitis (swelling of the vein)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redness, warmth and tenderness along the vein above the insertion site • Occurs usually within 3-5 days after the PICC was inserted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call your infusion nurse • Elevate your arm on pillows • Apply warm moist compress if instructed by nurse
Infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever with or without chills • Swelling, drainage with or without an odor at the site. • Pain or warmth at the site • General muscle aches and soreness, or a decrease in your activity level due to fatigue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call your doctor or infusion nurse <p>Avoid infections by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following instructions to avoid contaminating the catheter and the supplies you use • WASHING HANDS before beginning any procedure
Loose or disconnected cap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the cap fits loosely or comes off the catheter, air or bacteria can enter the catheter (see “Infection” and “Air in PICC”) • A loose cap may also leak fluid, or blood may back up and leak out near the cap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean the catheter cap with alcohol swab, and replace with a new cap as you have been instructed by your home infusion nurse • Discard the old cap that was loose Do not re-use the old cap. <p>Avoid a loose cap by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sure the cap is secure. • Being careful to not over-tighten, which may crack the cap
Break in catheter, accidental cut	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluid or blood leaking from the catheter site • You may be able to see a cut or tear in the catheter material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clamp catheter immediately above between where it enters your arm, and where the cut or tear is located • Call your nurse. Your catheter will need to be repaired or replaced <p>Avoid a break in the catheter by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never using scissors near your PICC • Never using force to flush your PICC

table continued on next page

How to Identify and Care for Potential Problems with Your PICC (*continued*)

Possible Problem	Signals to Watch For	What to Do and How to Avoid the Problem
Occluded (plugged) catheter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You cannot flush your catheter with saline or heparin using normal pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DO NOT use extra pressure when flushing your catheter Call your infusion nurse to report any difficulties flushing your catheter <p>Avoid an occluded catheter by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flushing your PICC regularly as you have been instructed Flushing your PICC anytime you see blood backing up, as instructed by your infusion nurse
Air in PICC (air embolism)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may suddenly have difficulty breathing, chest pain and dizziness or confusion 	<p><i>THIS IS AN EMERGENCY - CALL 911</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediately clamp the catheter near where it enters your arm If possible, lie down with your head lower than your hips and feet, and remain quiet <p>Avoid air in the PICC by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing the injection cap on your catheter Never removing the cap unless your catheter is clamped Never using force to flush the catheter
Movement of the catheter out of the vein (migration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may notice a new sensation in your neck or chest when flushing your catheter You may “hear” a flushing sound when flushing the catheter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call your infusion nurse The catheter may need to be repositioned and x-rayed again, or replaced

Protecting your PICC while you bathe or shower?

Keeping your PICC dressing clean and dry is an important step in preventing an infection. If the PICC dressing becomes wet, call your infusion nurse for assistance with a dressing change. If you have been taught how to change your PICC dressing, change it immediately after it becomes wet. Make sure you notify the Coram pharmacy so they can send you an extra dressing kit to replace any you have to use unexpectedly.

Using Plastic Wrap to Keep the PICC Dry

Newer types of plastic wrap that are designed to self-seal, such as GLAD Press'n Seal[®] wrap, are easier to use if you are doing this on your own.

- First cover the PICC dressing with a sock or other absorbent material
- Wrap the entire arm carefully in the plastic wrap
- Make sure water does not run down the arm beneath the plastic wrap while you bathe or shower
- Immediately remove the plastic wrap and absorbent material after the shower, and check that the PICC dressing is dry

Purchasing a PICC-Protector

There are several protector-devices that you can purchase from the internet or a medical supply store. Coram does not provide these devices—they need to be purchased directly by the patient. These devices range in price from \$15.00 to \$50.00, and most are designed to protect arm casts, which would also protect a PICC dressing. Be a careful shopper and make sure that any protector you purchase does not fit so tightly that it impairs the circulation to your arm. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when using any protector device.

Below is a list of sample devices:

- Active SEAL[™], approx. \$25.00, reusable
<https://secure.brownmed.com/products/StoreProductDetail29.cfm?StoreProductId=1>
- Shower-Dri , approx. \$10.00 each, reusable
http://www.showerdri.com/order_it.htm
- Medicare DryCast[®], approx. \$24.00 each, reusable
<http://www.medcareproducts.com/castcovers/products.asp?dept=1127>
- Aqua Guard, \$10.99 for 5, not reusable
<http://www.drugstore.com/templates/brand/default.asp?brand=42730&trx=SRCH-0BRAND-LINK&trxp2=42730>

What can I expect when my PICC is removed?

Your nurse will tell you when the physician has requested to remove the PICC. The PICC may be removed at your doctor's office, in the ambulatory infusion suite, or at your home. The dressing will be removed and the catheter will be gently and slowly pulled out. PICC removal may be slightly uncomfortable but should not be painful. If you experience pain while your PICC is being removed, please notify the infusion nurse or doctor who is removing the PICC. After your PICC has been removed, a gauze dressing and an antibacterial ointment will be placed over the exit site. You may remove this dressing after 24 hours.

To help your PICC exit site heal:

- Avoid heavy lifting or vigorous activities for 24 hours
- Keep the exit site dry for 24 hours

Symptoms to report to your doctor after your PICC is removed:

Call your doctor after your PICC has been removed if you experience any of the following:

- Fever
- Chills
- Drainage from the exit site
- Redness, warmth, swelling or a pink/red streak going up your arm
- A "knot" at the exit site or anywhere in the arm