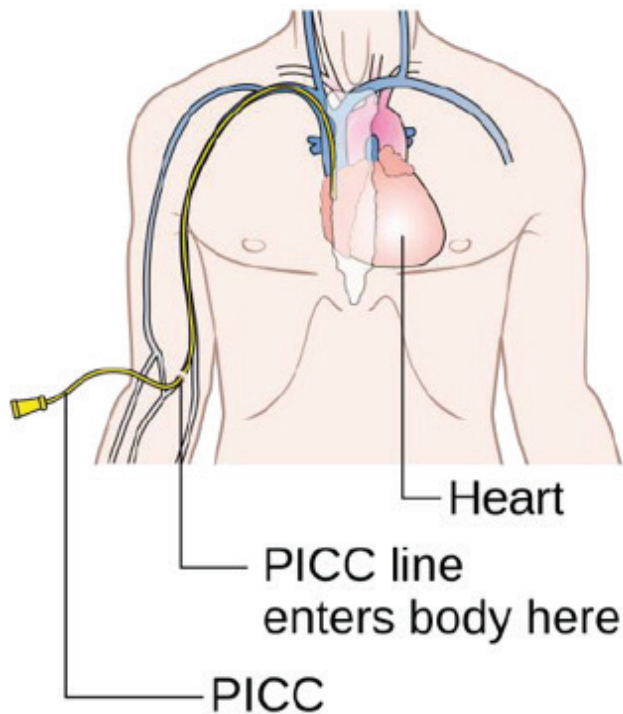


## What is a Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC) Line?

A Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC) is a small flexible tube placed into a large vein in the upper arm. The tip of the catheter ends in the vein above your heart known as the superior vena cava.

PICC's are used to protect the smaller veins in the hands and arms from repeated punctures associated with Intravenous (IV) therapy. PICC lines can be used when you require IV access for a longer period of time. They also allow larger volumes of fluid which is often too concentrated to be given via the smaller arm and hand veins.

PICC lines are held in place by a special dressing which secures the PICC firmly in place, the whole area is then covered by a waterproof dressing.



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Patient Information

## How to look after your PICC Line



MR0027226 RHC PI How to care for your PICC Line 6PP DL 0621



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## How to care for your PICC

To minimize the risk of infection any person touching your PICC should clean or wash their hands and they may wear gloves.

While you are in hospital the nurse caring for you should look at your PICC every shift. If you have any concerns or questions speak to your nurse or doctor.

The dressing needs to be changed every seven days. The dressing may need to be changed more often if it becomes loose, wet or soiled.

Do NOT let anyone take a blood pressure NOR take blood from the arm with the line inserted. Do not do any heavy lifting whilst the PICC is inserted.

## Dressings must always be done by a healthcare professional

Your PICC can be disconnected in-between doses under direction of your doctor or Healthcare Worker (HCW). If your PICC is disconnected the same line should never be reattached, a new line should be used for the next dose.

There may be some discomfort at the insertion site after your PICC is inserted and it may also be bruised for a few days. After this there should be no pain or discomfort.

It is very important to never touch your PICC or any of the line connections unnecessarily. Always have clean hands when touching, or if your hands are near to your PICC line.

Your PICC and dressing should be kept dry. When showering the use of a protective plastic sleeve is essential.

## Things to watch for

**PICC's are a very safe and widely used method of giving medications and fluids, however there are some potential problems which need to be watched for:**

- Infection

It is possible for an infection to develop either inside the catheter or around the insertion site. You should tell your doctor or nurse immediately if you experience any of the following:

- The insertion site becomes warm, red or swollen
- You notice discolored fluid coming from the insertion site
- Any pain or bleeding
- You develop a temperature, sweats or shivering
- Clots

As the PICC is sitting inside the vein it is sometimes possible for a blood clot (thrombosis) to form. If this happens you may be given some medication to dissolve it. If you notice any unusual pain/swelling in your hand, arm or neck you should tell your doctor or nurse immediately.

## How is a PICC removed?

When your doctor decides you no longer need your PICC it will be removed. The removal procedure is simple but should only be carried out by a healthcare professional. After the PICC has been removed you will be asked to lie flat for at least 30 minutes and a clean waterproof dressing will be placed over the insertion site which should remain in place for at least 48 hours.

## What will happen if my PICC falls out?

PICC's are very long tubes, often up to 55cm in length depending on your size. It is very unlikely your PICC will fall out but be very careful not to pull or catch the tube.

If your PICC does become loose or partially removed from the vein, do not try to reinsert it, cover with clean cloth and inform your nurse or doctor or attend your nearest emergency department.

## If you need any help or advice

If you have any problems with your PICC while you are at home or have any questions please contact the hospital/practice where the PICC was inserted.

## References

NSW Health, Clinical Excellence Commission, Intravascular Access Devices (IVAD) – Infection Prevention & Control, 2019

NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation. Central Venous Access Device Post Insertion Management, 2017

RHC IPC Hand Hygiene Policy, 2021

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