

Patient information

Midlines

What is a midline?

A midline is a thin flexible tube that is inserted into a vein in your upper arm. The line is pushed along the vein to approximately 20cm. A midline can remain in place for an average of 2 – 4 weeks.

A midline may have one or two tubes (lumens) and these are used to deliver medication and fluids directly into the blood stream.

Why do you need a midline?

Lines are inserted for several reasons, these include:

- Small veins in your hands and arms which are difficult to access repeatedly.
- The need for certain treatments over a long period of time eg antibiotics and fluids.
- The need for medication that may cause discomfort if given through a cannula in your hand.

How is the line put in?

If your line is being placed as an outpatient you will be asked to attend the Medical Treatment Unit (MTU).

If you are able to eat and drink, please continue to do so and if possible have plenty of water to drink prior to the procedure. A relative may accompany you for the procedure if you wish.

You may drive yourself, although you may wish to have someone with you for company.

Please wear a sleeveless or loose fitting short sleeved top for the procedure.

If you are an inpatient and it is safe to do so, we will transfer you to MTU for the procedure.

A specially trained nurse will insert your midline. The procedure will be explained to you and you will have an opportunity to ask questions. You will be asked to sign a consent form.

You will be made comfortable on a bed. If you are an inpatient you will possibly be transferred to the vascular access room on your bed. The procedure can take 30 to 60 minutes.

Local anaesthetic (Lidocaine) is used to numb the area around the vein prior to the procedure.

The nurse putting in your midline will wear a surgical gown and you will be covered with a surgical drape, this is to ensure that everything is kept clean.

Midlines are inserted using ultrasound to locate a suitable vein.

Occasionally it may be difficult to insert the midline; if this is the case then we may need to attempt the procedure in your other arm.

Risks and complications

As with most procedures, there is a small risk of complications, these include:

- **Infection:** It is possible for an infection to develop around the area where the midline goes into the vein. If this area becomes red, swollen, sore, oozes or if you develop a temperature above 37.5°C, have a shivering attack or feel generally unwell, you must let your nurse or doctor know. If you are being treated as an outpatient you need to contact the Macmillan Day Unit or ward G1 during office hours. If you are unable to contact them you need to attend the Emergency Department at your nearest hospital. See the contact numbers at the end of this leaflet.
- **Thrombosis:** It is possible for a blood clot to develop in your vein anywhere along the length of the midline. If you develop severe pain in your arm and it becomes red, swollen or hot, you must let someone know immediately. Contact

numbers can be found at the end of this leaflet.

- **Phlebitis:** This is inflammation of the vein due to irritation from the line. You may feel discomfort around and above the insertion site for a few days. You may find it helpful to take pain relief such as paracetamol. Placing a warm flannel or heat pad around the top of your arm for 20 minutes in every 4 hours may be beneficial.
- **Allergy to the dressings used:** Occasionally you may develop an allergy to the dressing used to secure your line. If you have concerns please inform your ward nurse and we will try alternative dressings. If you are an outpatient please inform the Macmillan Day Unit or ward G1. Contact details at the end of this leaflet.
- **Breaks, leaks and drips:** Very occasionally you may notice that the area around your midline is wet. This can be a sign of a break in the line or a loose connection. If you are an inpatient, please inform your nurse. If you are an outpatient, please inform the Macmillan Day Unit or ward G1: contact details at the end of this leaflet.

Caring for your line

Following your midline insertion, you will have a bandage over the area, this needs to be changed the next day. If you are an inpatient this will be done by your ward nurse. If you are an outpatient this will be done by the Macmillan Day Unit or ward G1.

Following your initial dressing, your line will be redressed and checked weekly.

To prevent your line from blocking, it must be flushed before and after each use.

If you experience any pain, discomfort or a shivering attack please inform your midline care provider.

Living with your line

You can lead a normal life with a midline but there are some things you need to be aware of:

- **Bathing:** You may have a bath or shower as normal but you must keep your line dry at all times. Please do not submerge your arm underwater when bathing. A waterproof cast cover can be purchased which will protect the area, these are available in the Friends of West Suffolk Hospital shop, in pharmacies or online.

- **Working:** There are no restrictions on working with a midline in place provided your doctor is happy for you to do so. Avoid heavy lifting or manual work.
- **Driving:** There is no reason why you cannot drive provided you are medically fit to do so.
- **Pets and children:** Do not let them play with your midline. Keep it covered at all times. Wash your hands thoroughly after handling pets.
- **Having your midline removed:** Once your treatment has finished and your doctors have agreed that the line can be removed, a nurse will do this either on the ward or you will be asked to attend MTU. The line is gently pulled out and is normally a painless procedure. A dry dressing will be applied which can be removed after 24 hours.

Remember

We are here to help. If you have any worries or questions after reading this leaflet, please do not hesitate to contact the:

Medical Treatment Unit (MTU) on 01284 712986, between 8.00am and 6.00pm

Macmillan Day Unit: 01284 713040, 9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday

Ward G1: Out of hours 01284 713234

Out of hours, please call West Suffolk Hospital 01284 73000 and ask to speak to the Emergency Department or Acute Assessment Unit.

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk. This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo) <https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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