

Patient information

Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

Introduction

It has been recommended that you have a peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC) inserted, as part of the care you are receiving. The practitioner inserting this device will usually explain the procedure, along with any potential problems to you. This leaflet aims to provide supporting information about the procedure and about the future care of your device. Additional information may be given by your doctor or nurse.

We advise that you make sure you are aware of the contents of this leaflet. If you have any worries, or require further information, please contact a member of staff.

Thank you

What is a PICC?

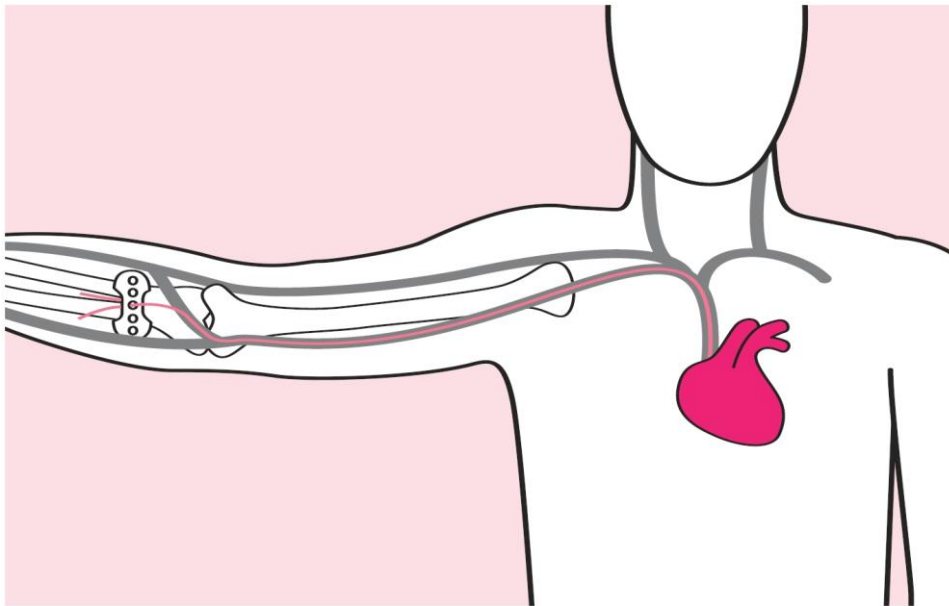
A PICC is a thin, flexible, hollow tube (described as a 'catheter'). They can be simply described as an extra long cannula. One end of the catheter is fixed to the upper part of your arm; the other end sits in a large blood vessel. The PICC allows your doctor or nurse to administer medication etc. into veins (please see diagram below).

How long will the PICC be in place?

Your PICC will usually stay in place for the length of your treatment. However, some

patients do require replacement catheters.

Diagram showing a PICC in a patient's arm



Why do I need a PICC inserting?

It has been suggested that you have a PICC inserted because of your treatment plan. Reasons for catheter insertion will vary and will depend upon your medical condition along with your proposed treatment.

What parts of my body are used to insert the PICC?

These catheters are typically inserted in your upper arm. Your practitioner will discuss with you and advise on right, versus left sided placement.

How do I prepare for the PICC insertion procedure?

As a patient you need to do very little to prepare before the insertion of the PICC. Your practitioner will discuss the insertion procedure, alternatives and potential problems. You will be offered an opportunity to discuss any issues prior to the PICC insertion procedure. You will normally be asked to provide consent for this procedure. Please inform the practitioner of any allergies that you may have.

What happens during the PICC insertion procedure?

The insertion of the PICC is not an operation, but the person inserting your catheter will treat it as a very clean procedure. They will wear a sterile gown, gloves and prepare sterile equipment. Your skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic, after which sterile towels will be placed over your arm.

Local anaesthetic will be used to numb a small area of your skin before the PICC is inserted.

The PICC is inserted through a needle. The needle is removed once the PICC is inserted.

Once the PICC is inserted it is fixed in place with a sterile pad or special sterile cloth strips and covered with a clear film dressing.

What happens after the PICC insertion procedure?

Once the PICC has been fixed in place you will need a chest x-ray. Once the x-ray has been checked you may begin to receive your treatment.

Are there any risks?

The insertion of the PICC is usually a safe procedure but it does carry some risks. These risks are similar to those that may occur with an ordinary cannula:

- Failure to insert: on rare occasions it may be difficult to insert the catheter. This may result in multiple attempts, or failure to place the catheter in your vein.

We will advise on alternative methods of venous access if we fail to insert the PICC

- Misplaced tip: occasionally the tip of the PICC inside your body may be found in a vein in your arm or neck. This will not harm you, however we will ensure the tip is relocated.

If the tip is not in the correct position we usually do not use the PICC for 24 hours. Following this time we repeat the chest x-ray. If the PICC tip remains in the wrong position we will discuss options with you.

- Bruising or bleeding: as with any procedure that involves the insertion of a needle into a vein, some bruising or bleeding may occur. The amount of bruising

or bleeding may be affected by your medical condition, or the medication you are taking.

Please inform us if you are taking any medication such as aspirin or warfarin that may affect bleeding.

- Dislodged catheter: check at least daily how much of the PICC is visible on your arm.

If the amount of PICC visible on your arm changes, please inform your doctor or nurse.

- Blood clot: on rare occasions, a blood clot can collect around the catheter. This would normally result in additional medical treatment.

If your arm with the PICC becomes swollen or painful please inform us immediately.

- Infection: the catheter is a direct route into your body, and sometimes the catheter may become infected. This may result in additional medical treatment, and possible removal of the catheter.

If you have a fever or chills, please inform us immediately.

- Blocked catheter: sometimes your catheter may block; this will prevent the catheter from being used. We may be able to unblock it, but if it cannot be unblocked, it may need to be removed.

If you are receiving drugs via a drip please inform the staff immediately when the bag/bottle is empty. When drips are disconnected the PICC must always be flushed.

- Mechanical irritation of the vein (phlebitis): some patients experience pain and redness along the length of the vein in which the PICC sits. This usually occurs within the first seven days following placement.

If the vein with the PICC in it becomes red or painful please inform us immediately.

How will my PICC be used?

Your catheter will be used to deliver medication, fluids etc.

The practitioners using the catheter will use a very clean technique, which involves hand washing, wearing gloves and using an antiseptic to clean the access ports before they are used.

Flushing is also important. Times when your catheter is flushed will vary, but it must be flushed whenever a medication is disconnected from the catheter.

If bags of fluid or drugs are connected to the PICC they must never be allowed to stand empty. The PICC must be flushed, or the bag changed immediately.

The dressings and access ports are usually changed on a weekly basis, unless they are loose or dirty, when they should be changed immediately.

When and how will my PICC be removed?

PICCs are usually removed at the end of treatment. Rarely, they are removed because of problems.

Your PICC is usually removed in a clinical environment. The dressing will be removed and the catheter will be pulled out easily, usually with no discomfort. Then a small dressing will be applied that you can remove after 24 hours.

Frequently asked questions:

- ***Will I have to sign anything?*** The procedure will be explained to you and you will usually be asked to sign consent form.
- ***Can I bathe/shower?*** With a waterproof dressing in place, you can bathe or shower. We ask that you try not to soak the dressing. A waterproof sleeve may be available on request. If the dressing is loose after your bath/shower, it will need to be replaced.
- ***What if my PICC falls out?*** If the PICC has only partly fallen out, fix it in place with some tape and contact your nurse immediately. If the PICC has completely fallen out press on the hole in your skin for a few minutes. Then apply a small sterile dressing. If it continues to bleed apply pressure for a further three minutes. Inform your nurse and keep the PICC for him/her to inspect.

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