

PICC Lines (Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter)

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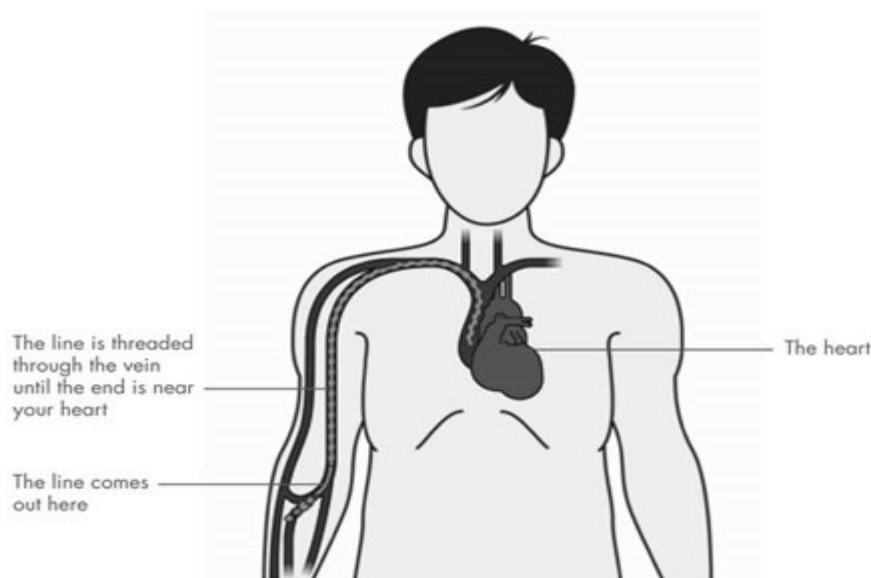


Peripherally inserted central catheter line

A PICC line is a long, thin, flexible tube known as a catheter. It is inserted into one of the large veins of the upper arm. It is then threaded into the vein until the tip sits in a large vein just above the heart.

The space in the middle of the line is called the lumen. Sometimes there are two or three lumens, known as double or triple lumens. This allows different treatments to be given at the same time.

At the end of the tube, outside the body, each lumen has a special cap or bung that can be attached to a drip or syringe. Sometimes there is a clamp to keep the line closed when it isn't in use.



What PICC lines are used for

The PICC line can be used to give you treatments such as [chemotherapy](#), [blood transfusions](#), antibiotics and intravenous (IV) fluids.

It can also be used to take samples of your blood for testing. PICC lines can be used to pass liquid food into the vein if your digestive system is not able to cope with food for any reason. This means that you won't need to have needles put into veins in your arms every time you have treatment.

You can go home with a PICC line in place and it can be left in for weeks or months.

A PICC line may be helpful if doctors and nurses find it difficult to get needles into your veins, or if the walls of your veins have been hardened by previous treatment.

How the PICC line is put in

Your PICC line will be put in by a specially trained nurse or doctor in an outpatient department or on the ward.

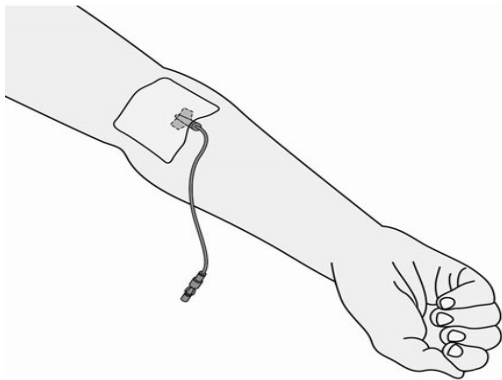
In the area for insertion, the skin is cleaned with antiseptic solution.

A needle will be inserted and the PICC line will be threaded through it into a large vein that leads to your heart. This is usually painless. The PICC line will be held securely in place by a transparent dressing and stabilizing device, called securAcath or Statlock. Statlock is attached onto your skin to hold the catheter secure, this will be changed weekly along with the dressing. A SecurAcath has blunt flexible feet which sit beneath the skin and keeps the catheter secure. It will be removed the same time as the catheter. It is also compatible with an MRI scan if ever required.

Placement can be confirmed with an ECG based device. Some patients may require a chest x-ray to check that the tube is in the correct position.

The line is flushed with 10mls of (0.9% sodium chloride) normal saline.

You will require a check the next day, where the dressing will be changed.



Possible problems when putting in the PICC line

If your veins are small, it may be difficult to locate a suitable vein to put the PICC line in. The doctor or nurse may use an ultrasound scan to help them locate the best vein to use. The ultrasound uses sound waves to produce a picture on a monitor showing the veins in your arm. The scan is painless and involves a small microphone-like device being rubbed gently over your arm.

Sometimes it can be difficult to thread the PICC line up the vein towards the heart. If this happens, it's usually possible to try again using a different vein.

Sometimes the x-ray shows the PICC line isn't in the right place. If this happens, the nurse or doctor may be able to reposition it. If this isn't successful it will be taken out and replaced.

Care of your PICC line

When the line isn't being used, there is a slight risk that it may become blocked. To stop this happening, a small amount of fluid is flushed into the line using a syringe. This is done regularly – usually once a week. The dressing will also need to be changed each week to reduce the risk of infection.

As it's difficult to do this yourself with one hand, the nurses at the hospital may do it for you or arrange for a district nurse to visit you at home.

When you're at home, it's safe for you to have a shower or bath with your PICC line in place. You can use cling film to cover the arm so the dressing does not get wet and this reduces the risk of the dressing getting disturbed.

Possible problems with PICC lines

You should contact your hospital doctor or nurse if:

- the area becomes red, swollen or painful
- any discoloured fluid comes from the area
- you have a high temperature (fever)

There are some known problems that can occur after having a PICC line inserted. It can get infected or it can get blocked. The vein can also develop clots or thrombosis.

The ends of the PICC line should always have caps or the line should have clamps. This is to prevent air from accidentally entering the line. To avoid the line from coming out accidentally, it should always be covered with dressings.

Blood clots

Signs of a blood clot around the PICC line include swelling, redness or tenderness in the arm, chest area, or up into the neck (on the same side as the PICC line).

Air in the line

No air can be allowed to get into your PICC line. Not all PICC lines have clamps. Some lines have caps at the end of the lumens that prevent air from entering the line. If your PICC line has a clamp, this should always be closed when the line isn't in use. The line must not be left unclamped when the caps aren't in place.

The line may come out

To avoid the line coming out by accident, it should always be taped or covered with a dressing. If the dressing holding the PICC line in place comes loose, you will need to get it replaced as soon as possible.

Break or cut in the PICC line

It is important that the PICC line is not cut or split. Do not use scissors near the PICC line. It is uncommon for a break or cut to occur in the PICC line.

Notes

Appointments:

24 hour PICC dressing:

Date:

Time:

Department:

Contact Information:

Please circle department patient to contact if any concerns

Pilgrim Chemo - 01205 446548

Pilgrim Bostonian - 01205 445347/446148

Lincoln Oncology Unit Ingham Suite - 01522 572260/572261

Vascular Department

Lincoln County Hospital/Pilgrim Hospital

References

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email

patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk

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