

# PICC - Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter

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Center for Vascular Access  
HHS: (905) 521-2100  
Juravinski Hospital ext: 42196  
Hamilton General Hospital ext: 46213



## ***WHAT IS A PICC LINE?***

A PICC line is a long, flexible catheter (thin tube) that is inserted into a vein in your upper arm that can stay in place for weeks to months. It stops in the large vein near the heart.

A PICC line may be required for treatments such as

- Prolonged intravenous antibiotics
- Difficult vascular access
- Chemotherapy
- TPN (Nutrition Support)
- Blood Transfusions
- CT Scans

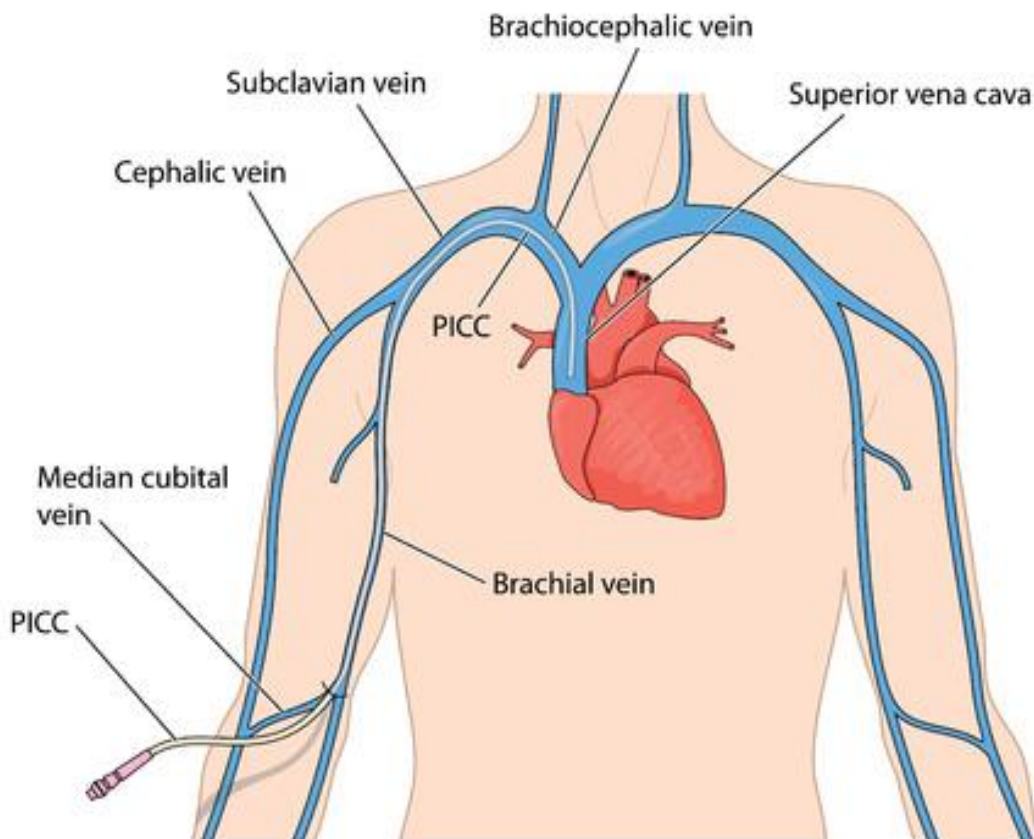
Having a PICC line can help avoid the pain of frequent needle sticks and reduces the risk of irritation to the smaller veins in the lower arm.

## ***THE PICC PROCEDURE***

There are no restrictions before your PICC insertion. If allowed and able, you can eat or drink normally.

The procedure is about 1 hour and can be done as an outpatient. If you are staying in hospital, it may be done in your room or the PICC procedure room.

You will lie down on your back with your arm extended for the PICC nurse to examine your veins using an ultrasound machine. They will choose the most suitable vein for insertion. The PICC nurse will place a “locating” device on your chest. This device will show the PICC tip location. If tip placement cannot be confirmed with the locating device, you will need a chest x ray at the end of the procedure. Prior to insertion, you will be draped, the skin will be cleansed and a local anesthetic called Lidocaine will be administered under the skin. You may feel a pinch or stinging sensation during this injection.



## ***CARING FOR THE PICC LINE***

You might have some bleeding or mild tenderness at the catheter site. This can last 1-3 days. A warm compress to the arm/shoulder can help with any discomfort

Keep the dressing (bandage) clean, dry and secure to the skin. If it gets wet, torn or dirty, it needs to be changed. Do not put lotions or ointments between the elbow and shoulder of the PICC arm.

The dressing should be changed once a week or as needed and will be done by the LHIN. They will need a clean space to wash their hands and change the dressing. If you need to handle your PICC, wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer beforehand.

You can use your arm for normal activities such as school, and work but for the first 24 hours after the PICC is inserted, avoid strenuous activities.

You may exercise moderately. Avoid swimming and contact sports such as hockey, basketball, football or soccer. The PICC area should not get wet or soiled in order to decrease the risk of infection.

When you shower or bathe, the clear dressing must stay dry. We suggest wrapping the area with a dry face cloth then cover with plastic wrap. Use tape or large elastic bands to secure the plastic wrap to the skin so it stays in place.

It is best to wear the IV tubing under your clothing to prevent pulling on the tubing during daily activities.

If the PICC has clamps, keep them closed when not in use.

Do not let anyone play or pull on the line. Keep animals away from the PICC line. Avoid using scissors near the PICC line or dressing.

Blood pressure monitoring and blood work should be done on the opposite arm from the PICC line where possible. PICC sleeve (covers) are suggested but should not be tight or compress the arm. Wear loose fitting tops when possible.

Additional Resources: follow [www.powerpiccsolo.com](http://www.powerpiccsolo.com) under education.

## **WHEN TO SEEK HELP**

**INFECTION:** Persistent fever greater than 38 (100.5), chills, redness or tenderness at the PICC line site. **Prevention:** Wash your hands before touching the PICC line. Have dressing changed if wet, dirty or lifting off the skin.

**BLOOD CLOT:** Swelling and pain in the arm, neck or face on the same side as the PICC line. **Prevention:** Drink lots of water and use the PICC arm normally. Try not to restrict movement.

**OCCLUSION:** PICC line has become kinked or blocked. **Prevention:** Flush PICC line after blood work is drawn, and between medications. If the PICC line is not used daily, then flush each lumen every 7 days.

**MALPOSITION:** Difficulty flushing or absence of blood return; gurgling or rushing sound in ear on same side as the PICC line. Throat, ear or jaw pain on same side as the PICC line or swelling in either arm. **Prevention:** Avoid vigorous upper extremity use.

**PARTIAL OR FULL ACCIDENTAL REMOVAL:** The PICC line looks longer than usual or is fully out. **Prevention:** Avoid pulling on line and be careful when dressing. If the PICC line is partially pulled out, tape in place and apply an extra dressing on top to help keep secure. If the PICC line is fully pulled out, apply pressure for 5-10 minutes to stop any bleeding then apply a clear band-aid or dressing.

**SKIN IRRITATION:** Redness, rash or persistent itchy sensation under the dressing. **Prevention:** Allow skin to completely dry before applying dressing. Consider alternative dressing such as a Mepilex with a stat lock if irritation persists.

## **WHEN TO SEEK EMERGENCY ATTENTION**

If the PICC line tears or breaks, kink the line by bending it over on itself between the damaged area and where it enters the skin. Secure with tape or a dressing.

**IF YOU DEVELOP CHEST PAIN, SHORTNESS OF BREATH AND/OR LIGHT HEADEDNESS, GO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM OR CALL 911.**

Lay on your left side with elevated feet until help arrives.