Your PICC line

Peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC)

the women's
the royal women's hospital

This fact sheet explains what a PICC line is, how we insert it and how to care for it. Your healthcare team will explain the procedure, possible complications and how to look after your PICC. If you have any questions, ask your nurse, midwife or doctor.

What is a PICC line?

A peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC) line is a long, thin, soft tube inserted into a vein in your upper arm. It passes through the vein until its tip sits in a large vein near your heart.

A PICC line is called a catheter. The hollow space inside the tube is called a lumen.

Your nurse or midwife can use a PICC line to give you treatments directly into your bloodstream. Unlike a cannula, which is a small tube usually inserted into a vein in your hand or arm and often needs to be replaced, a PICC line can stay in place for your entire treatment.

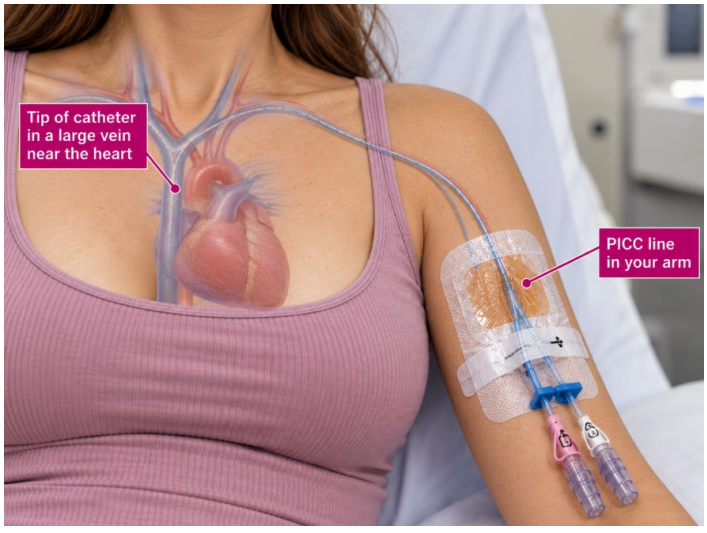


Image 1: Position of a PICC line in the arm and chest

This means your nurse or midwife can give you treatment through the PICC line without inserting a new needle each time. A PICC line can make regular, ongoing or home-based treatments easier and more comfortable.

A PICC line may have one, 2 or sometimes 3 lumens. Each lumen has a needle-free connector (cap) on the end and will also have a small clamp.

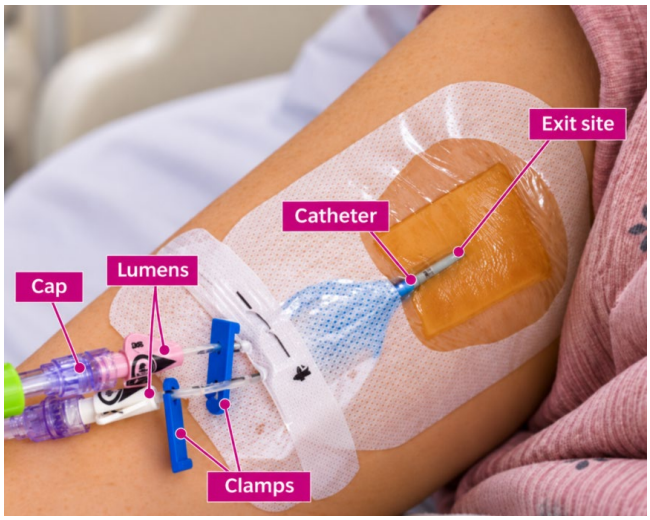


Image 2: PICC with dressing in place

A small section of the PICC line and its lumens stay outside your upper arm. We secure it with a dressing.

Your nurse or midwife can use the PICC to:

- give you medicines
- give fluids
- give nutrition
- take blood samples.

You may also hear a PICC line called a central line or CVAD (central venous access device).

Inserting your PICC line

A specially trained clinician will insert your PICC line in the imaging department.

The procedure is similar to having a drip put into your arm, but it takes longer to prepare.

We use ultrasound to find a vein and guide the PICC line into place. We will give you a local anaesthetic to numb the area. The procedure usually takes less than an hour.

After your PICC line is inserted

After we insert your PICC line, we will take an x-ray to make sure it is in the correct position.

We will place a dressing over the insertion site to keep it clean, dry and secure.

You may have mild bruising or discomfort for a few days after the procedure. You may also notice a small amount of bleeding during the first 24 hours.

When to contact us

Get urgent medical help if you:

- have a temperature of 38°C or higher
- have chills
- suddenly feel unwell
- develop swelling in your arm or neck
- notice your dressing is coming off
- notice leaking from your PICC line
- notice your PICC line is damaged
- notice your PICC line has moved
- notice any part of your PICC line has become disconnected.

Do not use a PICC line if it is damaged or has come out.

Call Triple Zero (000) if you have severe symptoms such as:

- chest pain
- difficulty breathing
- collapse.

If you can't contact your doctor or nurse, go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

Contact us

Ward / clinic: _____

Phone: _____

After-hours contact: _____

Next appointment: _____

Looking after your PICC line

Everyday care

- Keep the dressing clean, dry and intact.
- Wash your hands before touching the dressing or external line.
- Avoid pulling, twisting or catching the line on clothing, bags or door handles.
- Do not use scissors or sharp objects near the line.
- Follow the care plan from your healthcare team.

Showering and bathing

- You can shower if you cover the dressing and line with a waterproof cover.
- Do not put your PICC arm under water in a bath, spa, swimming pool, the ocean or other bodies of water.
- Contact your nurse or midwife promptly if the dressing becomes wet, loose or dirty.

Activity and exercise

- You can usually continue normal daily activities.
- Avoid heavy lifting, contact sports or repeated overhead arm movements, as they could move the PICC line out of place.
- Ask your healthcare team if you aren't sure whether an activity is safe.

Dressing changes

- A trained clinician will usually change your dressing every 7 days. They may change it sooner if it becomes wet, loose or dirty.
- Do not change the dressing yourself.
- The clinician will also check the external length of your PICC line every time they change the dressing.

Flushing

- Your PICC line needs regular flushing with a small amount of fluid to help keep it open.
- Your nurse or midwife will usually do this every week, or more often if you're an inpatient at the Women's.
- Do not inject anything into your PICC line yourself.
- Your healthcare team will arrange flushing and explain your care plan.

Common questions

- **How long will your PICC stay in?**
  Your PICC line can stay in as long as you need it. Your healthcare team will review this regularly.
- **Will it be uncomfortable?**
  You may have some mild discomfort or bruising for a few days after the PICC line is inserted. This is normal and usually settles quickly. Most people find it comfortable after the first few days.
- **Can you sleep on the arm with your PICC line?**
  Avoid lying directly on the PICC line or putting pressure on it.
- **Can you drive?**
  You can usually drive once you feel comfortable and can move your arm safely. Check with your healthcare team first.
- **When will your PICC line be removed?**
  A trained clinician will remove your PICC when you no longer need it.

Possible complications

Contact your healthcare team if you notice any of these signs:

- Infection: redness, warmth, swelling, discharge, fever or feeling unwell.
- Blockage: difficulty flushing the PICC line or receiving treatment through it.
- Vein irritation or clot: pain, swelling or tenderness in your arm, neck or chest.
- Line movement or damage: the PICC line looks longer than usual, is leaking, is cracked or has been pulled out.

Family Violence Support

1800 Respect National Helpline

You can get help if you have experienced sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.
You can call any time of day or night.
1800 737 732
1800respect.org.au

Do you need an interpreter?



You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

Your PICC details

Date inserted: _____

Type / size: _____

Number of lumens: _____

Next dressing change due: _____

Disclaimer: This fact sheet provides general information only. For specific advice about your healthcare needs, you should seek advice from your health professional. The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage arising from your reliance on this fact sheet instead of seeing a health professional. If you require urgent medical attention, please contact your nearest emergency department.
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