

Consumer information (for adults)

# Peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC)

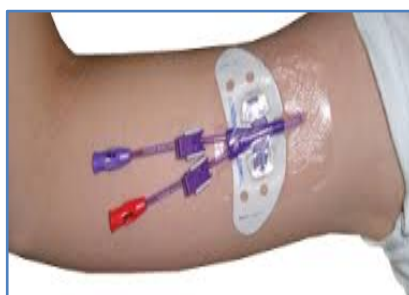
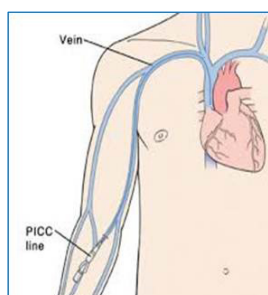
This information is to provide a guide for you and your carers on the insertion and management of a PICC. Your doctor and nurse will fully explain the procedure, possible complications and what is required to care for the PICC. Please ask about anything that you do not fully understand or wish to have explained in more detail.

## What is a PICC?

A PICC is a long soft flexible tube (catheter) that is usually placed in one of the large veins in the upper arm. The tube is threaded into a large vein above the right side of the heart. It is used to give medication directly into the blood stream without having to repeatedly insert a needle into a vein. Blood samples may also be taken through the PICC line. A PICC can be left in place for many weeks or months depending on the treatment.

## How is a PICC inserted?

The procedure is done in the X-ray department and generally takes around an hour. Local anaesthetic is used to numb the area. The insertion procedure is similar to having a “drip” put into your arm, except that ultrasound is used to locate the large vein and preparation takes longer as it is a sterile procedure. A specialised x-ray may be taken to check the position of the PICC.



## **Contact your healthcare provider or the emergency department immediately if:**

- > you develop a fever and/or high temperature, feel hot, cold or chills
- > you become short of breath, develop chest pain
- > there is a bloody discharge or other leakage from the PICC site
- > you develop redness, warmth or a lump at the PICC site or arm
- > there is a change in the length of the PICC/line
- > you feel pain or discomfort when medication is given through the line
- > you feel pain in your arm and/or swelling in your arm or hand.

## **Let your healthcare provider (e.g. nurse) know if you are concerned about your PICC dressing:**

- > loose dressing and/or exposed insertion site
- > wet dressing or blood present under the dressing
- > PICC/line has become dislodged.

**Do not attempt to change the dressing yourself.**



## Care of your PICC

It is important to care for your PICC to allow your treatment to proceed uninterrupted and to avoid complications, including infection, blood clots, blockages inflammation of the vein or excessive bleeding.

Your PICC will be secured in place and covered by a dressing, it is important the dressing remains in place to prevent accidental dislodgement/removal and to prevent infection. A nurse will change your dressing at least every 7 days.

It is safe to shower with a PICC in place as long as the insertion site and hubs are covered by an additional waterproof cover such as a plastic bag or cling film.

To avoid accidental damage to your PICC line, do not use any sharp instruments near your PICC line. **Do not clamp or pinch the line.**

When the PICC line isn't being used there is a slight risk that it may become blocked. To stop this from occurring, a small amount of fluid is flushed into the line using a syringe, this is usually done weekly by your nurse.

**Do not inject anything into the PICC yourself.**

Avoid general dental work if possible while the PICC is in place; discuss any urgent dental work with your doctor and dentist.

## Can I participate in sport or physical activity while I have a PICC?

Avoid strenuous exercise or lifting of heavy objects as excessive movement may dislodge your PICC.

You don't have to stop physical activity but you may need to think about what you do and how often you participate, for example there are some activities that you will not be able to participate in such as contact sports and swimming. Speak to your doctor, nurse or allied health professional for more information.

## PICC removal

Your doctor will advise when a PICC can be removed. It may be removed at your outpatients' appointment or by the home care nurse. Removal of the PICC line is very simple and takes only 10 to 15 minutes. A waterproof dressing will be applied which can be removed in 48 hours. Notify the nurse or your doctor if you notice any redness, heat or fluid discharge from the site after removal.

## Take this information with you when attending a healthcare setting

Your PICC has been inserted at:

**Hospital:** .....

**Name of inserter:** .....

**Vessel:** ..... **Insertion date:** .....

**PICC line details:**

**Catheter type:** .....

**External Length (exit point from skin to end of bung/connector):** .....

**Securement:** ..... **Arm circumference:** .....

**Pressure injectable (circle):** YES / NO

## For more information

**Hospital telephone:** .....

[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au)

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\*SA Health Safety and Quality Community Advisory Group.



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