

# Care of a Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

This information will help you to safely care for your child after discharge or when on temporary leave from the hospital with a PICC line

A PICC line is a soft, fine, hollow tube that is inserted into a vein in your child's upper arm or near the bend of your child's elbow used to deliver fluid, nutrition, antibiotics, chemotherapy, blood products or medication your child requires. The PICC line travels up the vein inside their arm into a larger vein just above the heart. A PICC line is a long term access device that can remain in place and function for many years. When your child no longer needs the PICC line, it will be taken out by a community nurse or at the hospital.

## How do I care for my child's PICC line?

Before leaving the hospital you will be taught how to safely care for your child's PICC line.

If you are caring for a child with a PICC line at home you need to know:

- > how to prevent infection and damage to the PICC line
- > signs or symptoms to be concerned about
- > who to contact if you need help or have any questions.

Knowing how to care for and manage the PICC line ensures that it remains in place for the length of treatment. Once your child goes home with a PICC line, you may need to access professional care in your home to provide support. Your child's PICC line will need a flush with special medication to prevent it from blocking and a dressing change, this will need to be done weekly. Generally, this is done by either your clinic nurse or community nurse.

Do	Don't
> Observe the dressing and insertion site <b>daily</b> for redness or swelling and ensure dressing is intact and secure. Your nurse will show you what to look for.	> Allow your child to swim with a PICC line.
> Always wash your hands before handling the PICC line.	> Allow your child to play with or remove the PICC dressing.
> Keep the PICC line covered at all times so it is not accidentally pulled out or removed.	> Allow your child or other children to undo the bandage and/or play with the PICC line and 24 hour infusor if attached.
> Make sure the PICC line is covered when washing or showering.	> Allow pets near the PICC line.
> Avoid rough, strenuous and repetitive play that may cause damage or infection to the PICC line.	> Allow your child to play in a sandpit or dirt as the PICC line may become dirty causing an infection.
> Allow your child to return to kindy/school as per the orders of your child's doctor.	> Plan any dental work while your child has a PICC line.

## How will my child receive their medications?

Most commonly, a 24 hour infusor is used which is a disposable pump that contains a balloon inside the casing. The balloon has your child's medicine in it. As the balloon slowly deflates it pushes the medicine into the line. It is held in a small bag with an adjustable strap that can be carried around on your child's waist or over their shoulder. It remains connected for 24 hours and needs to be changed daily. There is no need to return to hospital your community nurse can change it at home. Your child may also receive medication via a bolus up to three times per day. A bolus is a large volume of medication given at one time. This is usually done in hospital or by a community nurse.

## What will I need to look after the PICC line?

Before your child is discharged your child's nurse will provide you with education and a pack of supplies to take home with you including:

- > gauze
- > spare dressings
- > plastic clamps (open ended catheter only).

Please keep these supplies with your child at all times.

## Important information

Who will do my child's regular PICC flush and dressing change

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clinic Nurse    | Contact details ..... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Nurse | Contact details ..... |

The following information about your child's PICC will be important if you experience a problem and have to call the community nurse or the hospital:

Catheter type/size .....

Insertion date .....

- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single lumen | <input type="checkbox"/> Open ended   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dual lumen   | <input type="checkbox"/> Closed ended |

Exposed length of the PICC line .....

Home Team .....

Community/Clinic Nurse .....

**When you call the hospital remember to tell the nurse/doctor what your child's name is and what the problem is**

## What if something goes wrong?

Sometimes problems can occur with a PICC line. If you think something is wrong or your child has any of the following symptoms, follow the instructions below and contact the hospital on (08) 8161 7000.

If your child has	Instructions	Who to contact in hours (8.00pm - 4.00pm)
<b>Chest pain or difficulty breathing</b>	<p><b>This is an emergency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Lie your child on their left side with their head down</li> <li>&gt; Check and see if the PICC line is broken or the injection site has come off</li> <li>&gt; Keep as clean as possible and cover with additional dressing provided</li> </ul>	<b>Call an ambulance on "000"</b>
<b>A temperature above 38°C, is generally feeling unwell and/or if there is pain, swelling, heat or redness around the PICC line site</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Contact the hospital and explain the symptoms</li> <li>&gt; You may be required to return to hospital</li> </ul>	Women's' and Children's Hospital (WCH)
<b>Leaking or drainage at the PICC line site</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Look at the PICC line site</li> <li>&gt; Is there a crack or kink in the line? Where is the fluid coming from?</li> <li>&gt; Keep as clean as possible and cover with additional dressing provided</li> </ul>	WCH
<b>The dressing is coming off</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Do not remove dressing</li> <li>&gt; Secure with spare dressings</li> <li>&gt; Contact the hospital/community nurse and explain the situation</li> <li>&gt; The port dressing will need to be changed</li> </ul>	WCH / Your community nurse
<b>The PICC line appears longer or shorter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Secure the PICC line to prevent further movement</li> </ul>	WCH
<b>The PICC line has come out</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Apply pressure on the insertion site with two fingers and gauze on the neck or the arm (as shown by the nurses in the hospital)</li> <li>&gt; Press for 5 minutes, repeat this action if necessary until the bleeding stops</li> <li>&gt; Cover the site with gauze</li> </ul>	WCH
<b>Injection site, infusor or extension tubing falls off</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Keep clean as possible and cover with additional dressing provided</li> </ul>	WCH / Your community nurse
<b>Blood in the PICC line</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; The PICC line needs a flush to prevent a blockage</li> </ul>	WCH / Your community nurse
<p><b>Out of hours (4:00pm to 8:00am and weekends):</b> Take your child to the nearest Emergency Department or your local GP.</p>		



---

## For more information

**Women's and Children's Hospital**  
**72 King William Road**  
**North Adelaide 5006**  
[www.wch.sa.gov.au](http://www.wch.sa.gov.au)  
Pubic-I1-A2

**Monday to Friday (8.00am and 4.00pm)**

Phone: (08) 8161 7000

Ask switchboard to contact your Clinic Doctor or Clinic Nurse

**After hours 4.00pm to 8.00am and Weekends**

Take your child to the nearest Emergency Department or your local GP



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by SQCAG\* for consumers and the community - March 2016.

\*SA Health Safety and Quality Community Advisory Group.



**Government  
of South Australia**

SA Health



**Women's  
& Children's  
Hospital**

