

# Information for Patients: Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter

## What is a peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC)?

A peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC), is a long thin tube (catheter) made from a soft, flexible material that goes through a vein in your upper arm into a large vein connected to your heart.

Outside of your body, the PICC divides into one, two or three smaller tubes called lumens. Each lumen has a needleless connector on the end. It can be used to give IV fluids, medications, chemotherapy, blood products, or nutrition and to take blood samples.

A PICC line requires careful care and monitoring for complications.

## How is a PICC placed and what can I expect during the procedure?

Inserting a PICC involves a brief surgical procedure in the Interventional Radiology Department. You will stay awake while the PICC is put in. The procedure takes about 60 minutes.

During the PICC insertion, you will lie down on your back with your arm extended to your side. For your comfort, the non-dominant arm is usually used, unless there are reasons it cannot be.

A local anesthetic (freezing) is injected into the area the PICC will be inserted to numb the skin. You should only feel a small amount of pain or discomfort during the procedure.

A needle is inserted through your skin and into the vein in your arm guided by ultrasound. A small incision is made in the vein so that a catheter can be inserted. When the catheter reaches the right location, you will have an x-ray to make sure it is in the correct place.

A sterile dressing, gauze and device to keep it secure will be applied. The dressing will need to be changed within 24 hours to avoid infection.

Your cancer care team nurse will make arrangements to have the dressing changed. If you do not have an appointment by 12:00 noon the day after your procedure, call the cancer centre to ensure arrangements have been made.

## What should I do when I get home?

- Spend the rest of the day resting at home. You can eat or drink normally.
- You may feel sore and swollen around the area where the PICC was put in for a few days after the procedure. The area may also be bruised, which can take longer to go away.
- Do not get your bandages wet for 24-48 hours after the PICC was put in. After that you are able to shower if your insertion site is protected with a cover that keeps it from getting wet.
- Check your bandage for bleeding. If the exit site bleeds, press firmly on the exit site over the dressing until bleeding stops.

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## Caring for your PICC at home

### Checking the site

Check your insertion site every day for redness, tenderness, leaking, swelling and bleeding. If you have any of these signs or symptoms, call your cancer care team.

Check every day to make sure the caps and dressing are secure.

### Flushing the PICC

Each lumen needs to be flushed every seven days and after each use.

### Changing the dressing and caps

The see-through dressing should remain on at all times. It is important that it is kept dry, clean and intact.

The dressing should be changed every seven days. The insertion site will be cleansed with an appropriate antiseptic solution to prevent infection. If your dressing becomes wet, dirty or is falling off, it will need to be changed sooner. Contact your cancer care team or go to your local hospital to have the dressing replaced.

The caps need to be changed every seven days or sooner if it is cracked, leaking or falls off. If your cap has fallen off contact your cancer care team or go to your local hospital for it to be replaced. Do not put the same cap on – it may be contaminated.

Make sure arrangements are made for weekly dressing and cap changes. If you have any questions or concerns, contact a member of your cancer care team. Always keep your appointments for your weekly PICC care.

### How long can my PICC stay in place?

A PICC line can be left in for weeks or several months. It should last for the duration of your treatment, as long as it is working well and shows no signs of infection.

### Are there activities I shouldn't do when I have my PICC?

Having a PICC shouldn't keep you from doing your normal activities, such as work, school, showering and exercise. Avoid contact sports and swimming/water sports while your PICC is in place.

### General rules

- Do not have your blood pressure checked on the same arm as your PICC.
- Do not have blood tests with a needle on the same arm as your PICC.
- Do not use scissors or anything sharp near your PICC.
- Avoid lifting anything heavier than 20 lbs.
- Do not put any fluids or solutions into the PICC line unless instructed by your cancer care team.
- Laboratory staff cannot take blood from your PICC.

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### Problems that can occur and what to do

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Potential Cause</b>	<b>What to do</b>
Feeling unwell with one or more of the following to the PICC site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foul odor</li> <li>• Redness or heat</li> <li>• Swelling or oozing</li> <li>• Fever with/without chills</li> <li>• Chills and/or shaking</li> <li>• Increased heart rate</li> </ul>	Infection	Contact your cancer care team.
Break in PICC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaking fluid</li> <li>• A crack or hole in PICC</li> </ul>		Clamp the PICC as close to the insertion site as possible. If you do not have a clamp, kink the PICC and tape it to your arm. <b>Go to the Emergency Department.</b>
Air in the PICC (air embolism) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shortness of breath</li> <li>• Chest pain</li> </ul>	Air may have entered the vein and bloodstream	<b>This is an EMERGENCY!</b> Clamp the PICC as close to the insertion site as possible. If you do not have a clamp, kink the PICC and tape it to your arm. <b>CALL 9-1-1.</b> Lie on you left side and try not to move around.
Blood clot in vein (DVT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swelling of your hand, arm or neck on the same side of your body as the PICC</li> </ul>		<b>Go to the Emergency Department.</b>
Accidental removal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your PICC is partially or completely pulled out</li> </ul>	Tugging or pulling your PICC	Contact your cancer care team or <b>go to the Emergency Department.</b>

### **Call your cancer care team or go to the nearest emergency department if you have:**

- Fever 38.0 C or higher, with or without chills
- Sudden pain in your chest, or shortness of breath
- Pain, swelling, redness or drainage (fluid) around your insertion site
- Swelling of the neck, face or arm on the side where the PICC is inserted
- Leaking, cracked or broken PICC line
- The length of the catheter that sticks out of your arm gets longer or PICC is accidentally removed

### **Contact Information:**

- Allan Blair Cancer Centre  
4101 Dewdney Avenue, Regina  
Phone: 306-766-2213
- Saskatoon Cancer Centre  
20 Campus Drive  
Phone: 306-655-2662
- Regina Primary Health Care Treatment Centre  
1311 Broadway Avenue  
Phone: 306-766-0370  
Open 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, 7 days a week including statutory holidays