

MEDfacts

An Educational Health Series From National Jewish Health®



Caring for Your PICC Line

What is a PICC Line?

PICC stands for “Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter”. A PICC line is a catheter that is inserted into a vein in your upper arm. The catheter is advanced and positioned in a large vein in your chest just above the heart.

Why do you have a PICC line?

A PICC line is placed for you to receive IV medicine for a period of time. The PICC line will prevent you from having a needle inserted in a vein each time you need medicine. Medicine is less irritating when it is placed in a large vein.

How do you care for your PICC line?

The nurses at National Jewish Health will review PICC line care with you. In addition, a health care provider will help care for your PICC line when you are at home. This may be in an outpatient clinic or home care depending on insurance. You will receive a patient booklet about how to care for your PICC line. This booklet will review important information that will help you care for your PICC line. Keep it to refer back to.

- Apply a warm pack to the PICC line area for 30 minutes, every 2 hours for the first 24 hours.
- Take ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®) 400 mg. three times a day with meals for the first 3 days or as directed by your doctor. This will help prevent inflammation and/or soreness. If you are allergic to ibuprofen your doctor may recommend Tylenol.
- Keep the dressing dry and intact. Shower instead of taking a bath. Ask the nurse for an arm protector to keep your arm dry when you shower. Do not submerge your PICC line arm in water. Do not swim or go in a hot tub with a PICC line.

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- Do not have blood/labs drawn from the Groshong PICC line.
- When your blood pressure is taken, use the arm without the PICC line.
- Avoid activities with a lot of arm movement. Also avoid heavy lifting over 5 to 10 pounds. There is a risk the PICC line will become dislodged with a lot of upper body movement. Ask your health care provider if you have questions.

How do you clean the PICC line site and change the dressing?

Your patient booklet describes how to clean the PICC line site and change the dressing. You may go to an outpatient clinic or have a home health care nurse come to your home to change the dressing. The PICC line dressing is changed once a week. When the dressing is changed the stabilization/securement device and the clear covering to secure the PICC line and the end cap where the medicine is placed will also be changed.

How do you flush the PICC line?

Your patient booklet describes how to flush your PICC line with saline. This will help clean the line after medication is given via the PICC line. If your PICC line is not used often the PICC line will need to be flushed regularly.

- Groshong PICC line –The Groshong PICC line will need to be flushed with 10 cc of saline. This is done before and after each use or weekly when not in use.

Flushing the PICC line will help keep the line open and prevent clots. You will be instructed on how to flush the PICC line. You may go to an outpatient clinic or have a home health care nurse come to your home to flush the PICC line.

What can you do if the PICC line doesn't flush?

If you are not able to flush the PICC line call your health care provider or home health nurse. Do not push the syringe against a resistance.

What are signs to watch for?

Watch for these signs:

- Swelling, redness, red streaking, hot or hard area in PICC line arm
- Pain in PICC line arm
- Fever or chills
- Swelling of the hand, arm and/ or neck on the same side as the PICC line.
- Leaking of fluid when you flush the catheter

Call your health care provider or PICC line care provider right away if you notice these signs or if you are worried or concerned.

What type of PICC line do you have?

Currently at National Jewish Health we are using the Groshong PICC line. You should receive information about your PICC line. This will include information about the PICC line brand, lot number, location and length of catheter, tip location and when the PICC line was inserted. Keep this handy to show your health care providers.

If you have problems or questions while in Denver or at home, notify:

- MIDC, 303-398-1958
- Adult Care Unit, 303-398-1478
- Cystic Fibrosis Clinic, 303-398-1178 or 303-398-1263
- Your health care provider or PICC line care provider.

Note: This information is provided to you as an educational service of LUNG LINE® (1-800-222-LUNG). It is not meant to be a substitute for consulting with your own physician.

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