



Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

CARING FOR YOUR PICC LINE

Depending on your infusion therapy, you may leave the hospital with a peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC). Your PICC is a sterile tube, which carries medication and nutritional care into your bloodstream. Amber Specialty Pharmacy will coordinate with your health care team to help you manage your PICC and the rest of your infusion therapy. Proper care of your PICC, including good hygiene and hand-washing, is extremely important to avoid infection or complications. Amber Specialty Pharmacy and your home health care nurse will equip you to successfully and confidently care for your PICC at home.

Understanding Your Role

- An Amber Specialty Pharmacy liaison or home health care nurse will teach you and your caregiver how to care for your PICC properly when you are home. Amber Specialty Pharmacy will make sure you understand what to do at home, when to schedule follow-up visits and whom to contact if you have questions.
- The Amber Specialty Pharmacy standard for flushing is saline antibiotic, saline heparin (SASH). Your home health care nurse will teach you this technique.
- You will learn to clean your PICC injection cap with an alcohol swab for 20 seconds.
- With proper training from your Amber Specialty Pharmacy liaison and home health care nurse, you will learn to safely administer your infusion medication.

A home health care nurse will ensure you are taking good care of your PICC in between your regular in-home visits. Always follow the instructions provided. You can contact Amber Specialty Pharmacy 24 hours a day, 7 days a week if you have any questions.

PROTECTING YOUR PICC

Amber Specialty Pharmacy team members are experts in infusion therapy, so they will be your main contact for questions about your PICC or medication administration. Follow the instructions provided about caring for your PICC and remember these tips:

- Prevent infection by using good hand-washing techniques. You and your caregivers should take extra precautions and prioritize cleanliness. Do not touch the PICC unless it is necessary. Always wash your hands thoroughly before and after caring for your PICC.
- Keep the PICC dry. Your catheter and dressing must stay dry. In most cases, a PICC cannot be submerged in water. Consult with a member of your Amber Specialty Pharmacy health care team before spending time in bathtubs, swimming pools or hot tubs. Use a moisture barrier, such as an AquaGuard® shower shield, to cover your PICC while showering. Your Amber Specialty Pharmacy nurse liaison or home health care nurse will show you how to use a moisture barrier. Please notify a member of your health care team if your dressing does get wet.
- Protect your PICC to prevent damage or injury. Do not use sharp or pointy objects, such as scissors, razors or knives, near your PICC. Do not allow anything to pull or rub on your PICC. Be especially mindful of the clothing you wear to prevent accidental pulling on your PICC.
- Pay attention to your PICC and watch for any problems. If there are any unusual or unexpected changes of any kind, please contact your Amber Specialty Pharmacy pharmacist or a member of your health care team. Watch for cracks, leaks or any kind of damage. If your dressing becomes loose, wet or dirty, call your health care team.
- Talk with your Amber Specialty Pharmacy health care team if you are vomiting or have a severe cough. The stress of these actions may disrupt the catheter site, causing your PICC to slip from its proper position.
- Limit daily activities that require you to bend at the waist, like tying your shoes. When your chest is below your waist for an extended period of time, the catheter tip may shift from its proper place.

PROTECTING YOUR ARM

The arm where your PICC is inserted will need extra attention throughout your day. There is potential for blood clots to develop in this arm. To help prevent this problem, follow the instructions provided by your Amber Specialty Pharmacy home health care team and remember these tips:

- Use your arm normally throughout the day when possible. Limited movement can lead to blood clots, so it is very important to move your arm. Your doctor may suggest light arm exercises.
- Do not overuse your arm. Avoid excessive arm movement, especially in certain athletic activities. Talk with your doctor or a member of your health care team if you have any questions regarding specific activities.
- If you experience pain in your arm during activity, stop the activity and contact a member of your health care team.
- Do not use your affected arm to lift objects weighing over 10 pounds.
- Drink plenty of water and stay hydrated.

GOOD HYGIENE & PROPER HAND-WASHING TIPS

To prevent infection, it is important that you and your caregivers keep your IV catheter site clean. Keeping your infusion line access clean starts with good hygiene and proper hand-washing. Washing your hands with soap and water is essential to your care. Remember, never touch the IV site or dressing without taking time to wash your hands using these suggestions:

- Wet your hands with warm water. Avoid hot water, which can lead to skin irritations.
- Use antibacterial soap to cover the entire surface of your hands and fingers.
- While washing, rub your hands together vigorously for at least 30 seconds. Make sure to rub the front and back of each hand up to your wrists, including your fingers, fingernails and between each finger and thumb.
- Rinse your hands thoroughly with warm water.
- Dry your hands completely with clean unused paper towels. Do not use reusable or cloth towels because they can carry germs.
- Use a paper towel to turn off the faucet, and then throw the towel away. When needed, use the paper towel to open the bathroom door to avoid touching the door handle.
- After you have thoroughly washed and dried your hands, you may also want to apply hand sanitizer. Cover your hands with sanitizer and allow them to air dry.

FLUSHING YOUR CATHETER WHEN NOT RECEIVING MEDICATION

Sometimes you will need to flush your catheter when you are not administering medication as part of routine maintenance. Amber Specialty Pharmacy standard protocol is to flush a non-valved PICC every 24 hours with saline and heparin. For valved PICCs, Amber Specialty Pharmacy standard is to flush weekly with saline. Your Amber Specialty Pharmacy home health care team will provide specific instructions on how to care for your catheter in between infusions.

CATHETERS WITH MORE THAN ONE LUMEN

Your catheter may have more than one lumen, which means your catheter has more than one channel of access. Depending on your specific infusion therapy, you may use one or both lumens for medication administration. Your Amber Specialty Pharmacy home health care team will help you understand which lumen to use. You will also learn how to care for the lumens in between medication administrations.

MONITORING YOUR INFUSION THERAPY & WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL HELP

Contact a member of your Amber Specialty Pharmacy health care team immediately if you experience any of the following:

- A painful burning sensation in your chest, shoulder, arm or leg
- Tightness in your arm above the catheter
- A temperature of 100.5°F or higher
- Chills
- Nausea or vomiting
- Coughing or shortness of breath
- Hives, rash or itching
- Irregular heartbeat
- Aches or muscle stiffness
- Your IV catheter leaks or breaks or becomes damaged

Contact Us

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