Contents

What is a PICC line?

Why is a PICC line necessary?

How is a PICC line put in?

Who will care for your PICC line?

How will you know if something is wrong?

Removal of your PICC line

Useful contact number

What is a PICC line?

A PICC is a peripherally inserted central catheter. It is a thin flexible tube that is inserted into a vein in the upper arm. The PICC is then threaded along the vein so that the tip of the line lies in one of the large veins just above your heart. Normally the PICC lines are inserted at the hospital where a specially trained nurse will insert your PICC. A PICC line can remain in place for many months while you are receiving treatment.
Why is a PICC line necessary?

PICC lines are inserted for several reasons:
- A PICC line can be used to give chemotherapy, anti-cancer drugs, fluids, antibiotics and other drugs directly into the vein.
- They are ideal for people who have small veins which are difficult to find or access, or for people who are very anxious about needles.
- PICC lines can be used to take blood samples.

How is the PICC line put in?

A doctor will insert your PICC line and will explain the procedure fully to you. You will be required to lie flat for approximately 30 minutes and will be asked to position your arm at an angle away from the body to assist with the positioning of the line. This helps to make the insertion of the PICC more successful.

The nurse placing the PICC will wear protective clothing and prepare their work area carefully, to ensure that the procedure is carried out safely as possible.

Once the PICC line has been threaded along the vein successfully, the nurse will secure the line with a small device attached onto the line called a Stat Lock; this will ensure that the line does not move out of place. A sterile clear dressing and possibly a bandage is then placed over the Stat Lock and will remain in place for a couple of hours. This bandage can then be removed by the patient later the same day leaving the other dressings in place. It is always necessary to clarify the correct position of the PICC by a chest X-ray and this will be performed immediately the line is placed.

Occasionally it may be difficult to thread the PICC along the vein of choice or to place the line into the correct position, making the procedure unsuccessful at this attempt; other choices will be discussed if this occurs.

Your PICC line will need to be re-dressed within 24-48 hours of the placement as often the insertion site can bleed. This is usually done by the district nurses the following day for a dressing change.

Who will care for your PICC line?

Whilst in hospital the nursing staff will care for your PICC. This will involve:
- Cleaning the exit site and applying a new dressing weekly unless soiled.
- Flushing the line when not in use to prevent blockage of the line when it is not in use.
When you leave hospital, we will arrange for the district nurse’s to attend weekly to your home. They will clean, redress your PICC line and flush it weekly whilst you’re not attending the hospital. The district nurses are experienced in caring for PICC lines and will have all the equipment required to care for the PICC.

Whilst you have a PICC line it is vital that anyone who handles the PICC or redresses the site has a good standard of hand hygiene. They must wash their hands in anti-bacterial soap first and use a sterile method during all actions taken with the PICC line or at the exit site. It is important that your PICC exit site remains completely covered at all times even when being used and when at home.

When having a shower or bath it helps to wrap the PICC line in “Clingfilm”, this will act as a waterproof cover. You can lead a normal life with a PICC in but there are some things that should be avoided. Swimming is not possible, heavy work and certain sports are not advised due to the increased risk the PICC may become dislodged.

When your line is no longer needed the PICC will be removed by your team at the hospital, this is a simple procedure.

How will I know if something is wrong with my PICC line?

Sometimes problems can occur while you have a PICC line.

- PICC lines can become infected, please report any pain, redness or oozing from the site immediately to the Hospital at Home team.

- Please check your temperature if feeling unwell and report any temperature above 37.5

- Blood clots can develop in the vein or along route where the PICC line is sitting, please report any swelling or pain to your arm or neck immediately to the Hospital at home nurses. If you do develop a clot, you will be commenced on specific
treatment and your PICC may have to be removed. Occasionally PICC lines can break or leak.

- The line can sometimes come out from its current position, if you think it has moved contact the Hospital at Home team who will liaise with the hospital and decide best plan of care.

- During the first 72 hours your arm can ache and appear red following having a PICC line placed this is called mechanical phlebitis. This is normally nothing to worry about, try placing warm compresses on your arm this can help ease the discomfort and simple analgesia will also help especially in the first 24 hours.

**Removal of your PICC line**

Once treatment is complete your team will arrange for your PICC line to be removed at the hospital. Occasionally your PICC line may need to be removed earlier due to the reasons stated above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Useful contact number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you are concerned about any aspect of your PICC line please contact:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Your district nurse/hospital at home team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kind thanks to Macmillan for allowing usage of their images.

**Comments, Compliments or Complaints**
The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

The Patient Relations/PALS Manager
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary
Wigan Lane
Wigan WN1 2NN

Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille and other languages upon request. For more information call 01942 773106.