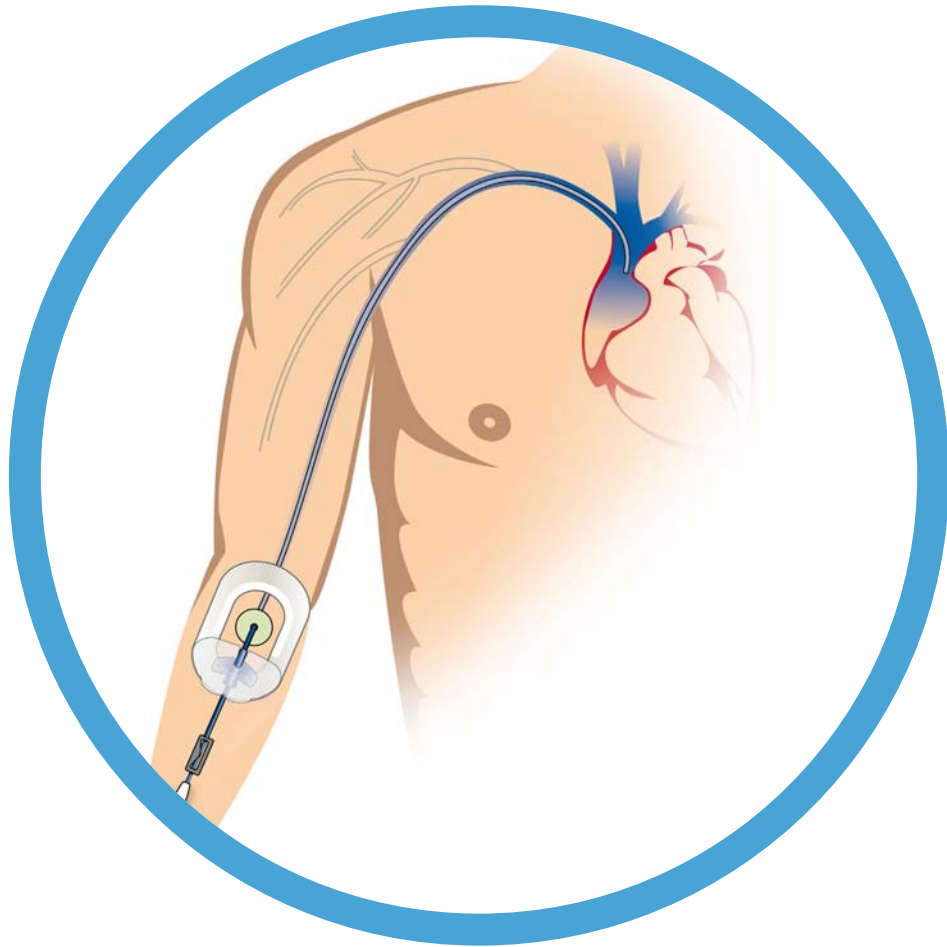


## Caring for Your Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC): A Guide for Patients and Family Caregivers



**THIS GUIDE SHOULD BE USED ONLY IF YOU AND/OR YOUR FAMILY CAREGIVER(S) HAVE BEEN TRAINED** in all the preparations and activities in it. After training and practice, you should be able to do these activities with assistance from:

- Your family caregiver(s) or
- Your home care nurse

If you and/or your family caregiver(s) have not been trained or are uncomfortable doing these activities, tell your home care nurse. He or she will be able to help you.

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This resource for patients and family caregivers and the home care nurses who are teaching them basic care techniques related to PICC lines is part of a framework for improving infection prevention practices that can be customized to meet the needs of individual institutions, regardless of size, academic teaching status, staffing model, patient population, or available resources. United Hospital Fund (UHF) makes no guarantees or warranties of any kind regarding this guide, including, without limitation, guarantees as to the accuracy of the information provided to us by the individuals and institutions who participated in the UHF PICC Line Initiative, and we make no representations or warranties relating to the fitness of the information for any particular use or purpose. The information provided is not medical advice and should not be relied upon as such, nor should the information be used as a substitute for clinical or medical judgment. UHF does not assume liability for any damage or injury resulting from the use or misuse of any information provided herein.

## A Note to Home Care Nurses about this Patient Resource

This resource, *Caring for Your Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC): A Guide for Patients and Family Caregivers*, was developed to help patients and family caregivers care for PICC lines in the home care setting. It is to be used along with your personal instruction and guidance on how to appropriately care for PICC lines to reduce the risk of infection.

Not all of your patients will be able to do the activities in this guide independently. Your role is to assess your patients' abilities to understand, follow, and carry out the instructions in this guide. Any personnel using this resource should have received in-service training on how to effectively use it with patients and family caregivers.

### How can the home care nurse best use this guide?

- Print out a copy of this resource for each patient and family, *in color* so that the pictures will be clearest and easiest to follow.
- Read through and discuss this resource with the patient and family caregiver, and then allow them time to ask questions. You can share the information with them during the first home visit, and help them become more familiar with the PICC line. Then, during subsequent visits, go through each component again step by step, as the patient and family caregiver(s) become more comfortable with the PICC line and its care.
- Encourage the patient and family caregiver to determine what sections of the resource are most pertinent and useful to them. For instance, many patients and caregivers have commented that the portion on “Protecting the PICC when Showering” (pages 7-8) is especially helpful and relevant. You might suggest that your patient hang such sections of the guide where they can serve as reminders.
- Remember that caring for PICC lines is a complicated process: attention needs to be given to providing patients and family caregivers with as much understandable and accessible information as they can accept and retain, so they can feel comfortable following the steps detailed in this resource.

*(Continued)*

## How can patients and family caregivers use this resource?

- This resource is divided into a number of sections, focusing on: general information and reminders on the patient’s specific PICC and treatment (including important phone numbers and a schedule of visits); an overview of what a PICC line is and its purpose; the basics of caring for a PICC, including warning signs of complications; and essential activities, including protecting PICC lines when showering, and flushing PICC lines, with or without giving medication. For patients of health care systems/home health agencies that allow or request it, an appendix (which can be removed from the main body of the guide) also details the steps involved in changing the PICC line dressing.
- Patients and family caregivers can follow and use all of the components described above, or can pull and post the sections that are most relevant for them and with which they feel comfortable.

## How this resource was developed

This educational booklet is an outgrowth of a grant initiative, *Preventing Central Line-Associated Bloodstream Infection (CLABSIs) in the Home Care Setting*, conducted by acute care and home care personnel from two large health systems—Montefiore Health System and Northwell Health—and their home care agencies, and funded by United Hospital Fund. As part of this project, patients and family caregivers were surveyed to identify the types of education and resources that would be useful to them in caring for their PICC lines. This hands-on resource addresses the most pertinent areas in which patients and caregivers felt information and teaching would be helpful. A toolkit of resources has also been developed to help home care and hospital providers systematically assess the risks for and reduce the incidence of CLABSIs in patients receiving home health care services, and to promote more effective communication between care settings. The toolkit can be accessed at <http://www.uhfnyc.org/publications/881133>.

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If your home care provider has discussed with you the possibility of you or a family member changing the PICC line dressing, please refer to the Appendix for a guide to safely doing so.

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- Your family caregiver(s) or
- Your home care nurse

If you and/or your family caregiver(s) have not been trained or are uncomfortable doing these activities, tell your home care nurse. He or she will be able to help you.

# Patient Treatment Information

## About this PICC line

*This section should be completed by the home care nurse.*

Date of PICC insertion: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

Anticipated length of treatment: \_\_\_\_\_

Length from end of infusion cap to point of entry into the skin: \_\_\_\_\_ centimeters (cm)

## Important phone numbers

*This section should be completed by the patient or family caregiver.*

Your doctor/clinic name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your doctor/clinic phone number: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Your home care therapy service name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your home care nurse contact number: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Your medical supplies are delivered by: \_\_\_\_\_

Your medical supplier's contact number: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

## Schedule of upcoming visits

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Who will be visiting: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Who will be visiting: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Who will be visiting: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Who will be visiting: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

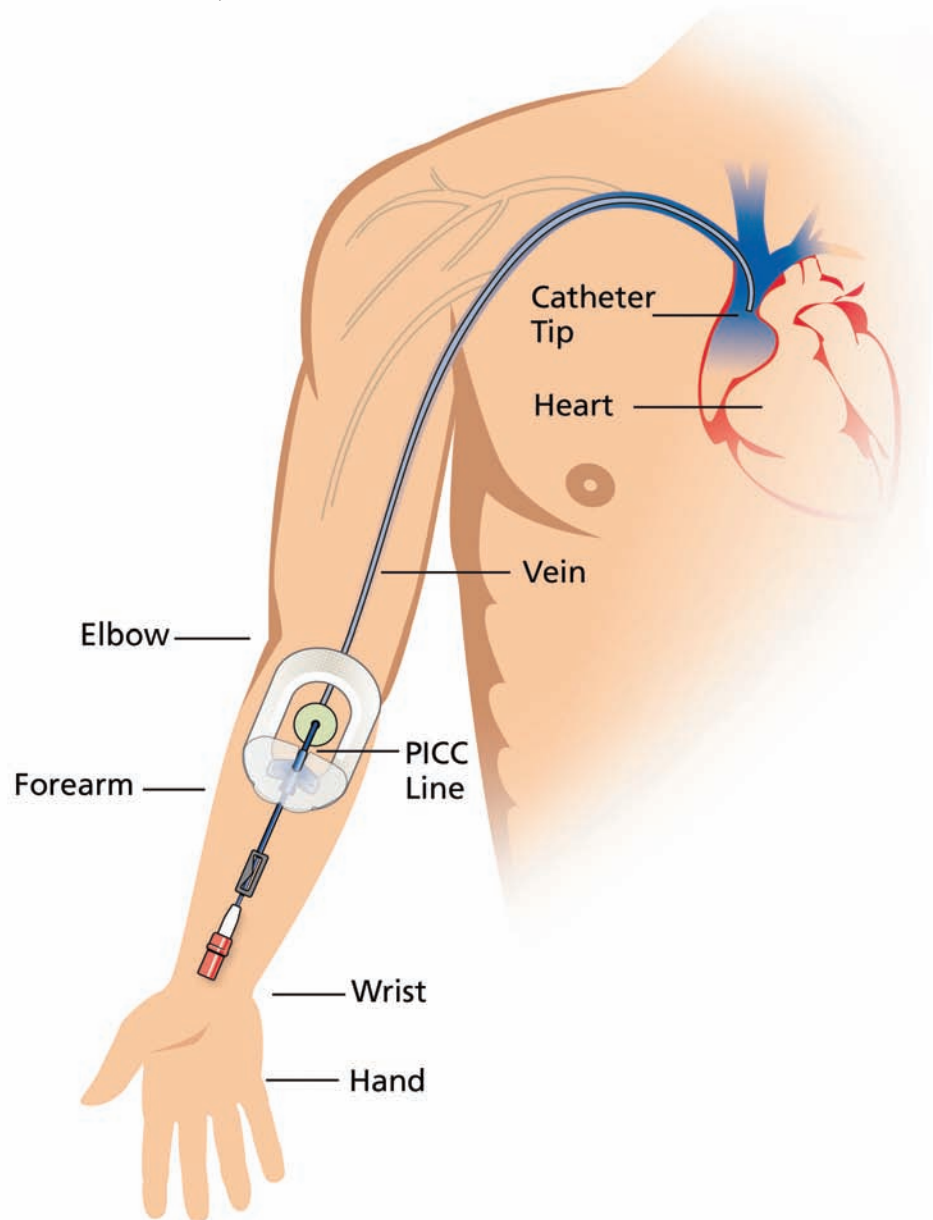
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Who will be visiting: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: You may want to use your own calendar system, but it is critical to keep track of visits.*

## What Is a Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)?

A PICC, or peripherally inserted central catheter, is a flexible tube that is inserted into a vein in your arm. The PICC is used to give you intravenous (IV) fluids (liquids introduced into the vein), medications, and other treatments.

Your PICC may have 1, 2, or 3 hollow tubes; each one is referred to as an infusion line. The number of infusion lines depends on the number and type of fluids, medications, or any other treatments you need at home.



## How is a PICC used?

A PICC can be used to:

- Give IV fluids
- Give medications, such as antibiotics
- Give IV nutrition
- Give blood products
- Draw blood

## Taking Care of the PICC

It is important to take care of your PICC properly, to avoid infection. Infection can happen when germs enter the blood through the:

- Puncture site while the PICC is being inserted
- Infusion line at the point the PICC enters the skin
- Caps at the end of the PICC
- IV fluid, medication, or other treatment that is put through the PICC

By following the guidelines in this booklet, you can prevent germs from entering the PICC and causing an infection.

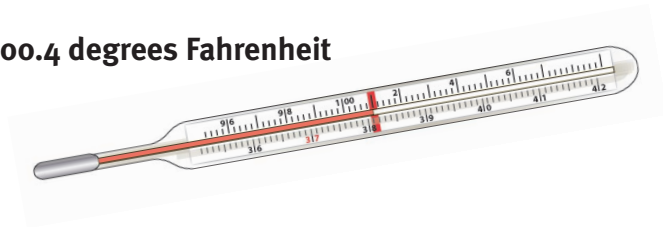
## Always remember

- Only those who have been trained should care for the PICC.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before touching the PICC.
- Keep the dressing clean and dry.
- If you are responsible for changing the dressing, keep the area around the PICC clean while doing so.
- Clean the infusion line caps before IV fluid, medication, or other treatments are put through the PICC.



**Contact your home care nurse or doctor *immediately* if:**

- **Your temperature is higher than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit**



**or**

- **You have any of the following symptoms around the area where the PICC enters the skin:**

- Pain in your arm
- Bright red blood, or drainage of any color, under the dressing
- Redness, tenderness, or swelling
- Swelling in your neck, hand, fingers, and/or upper arm

**or**

- **You notice any of the following problems with your PICC:**

- A tear or break in the PICC
- Leaking of fluid or medication from around the PICC at the point where it enters your skin
- You are having trouble flushing the PICC or are unable to do so
- The PICC line seems longer than it was, from the point of insertion to the catheter hub, or the line seems to have been partially or completely “pulled out”

**Your Doctor/Clinic Phone Number:** ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Home Care Therapy Service Number:** ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Home Care Nurse Contact Number:** ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

## How Do I Care for My PICC at Home?

**Three important activities** need to be done while caring for your PICC at home:

1. Changing the PICC dressing
2. Protecting your PICC line when taking a shower
3. Flushing the PICC, either with or without giving an infusion treatment

Activity to be completed	Purpose of the activity	When to perform this activity
1. Changing the PICC dressing	The dressing protects your PICC and can prevent infection.  <i>It is important to keep the dressing dry and in place at all times.</i>	Every 7 days –or– Whenever the dressing gets dirty or wet or becomes loose  <i>Only change your dressing when someone is nearby to help you, if necessary.</i>
2. Protecting your PICC when showering	The PICC site must be protected while showering in order to prevent wetness or loosening of the dressing.	Before every shower  <i>Only shower when someone is nearby to help you wrap your arm.</i>
3. Pushing fluid through the PICC (flushing), with or without giving an infusion	Flushing the PICC will keep the catheter from clotting so you can receive treatment. The catheter is flushed with sterile saline solution; in some patients, heparin may be used.	Before <i>and</i> after all treatment

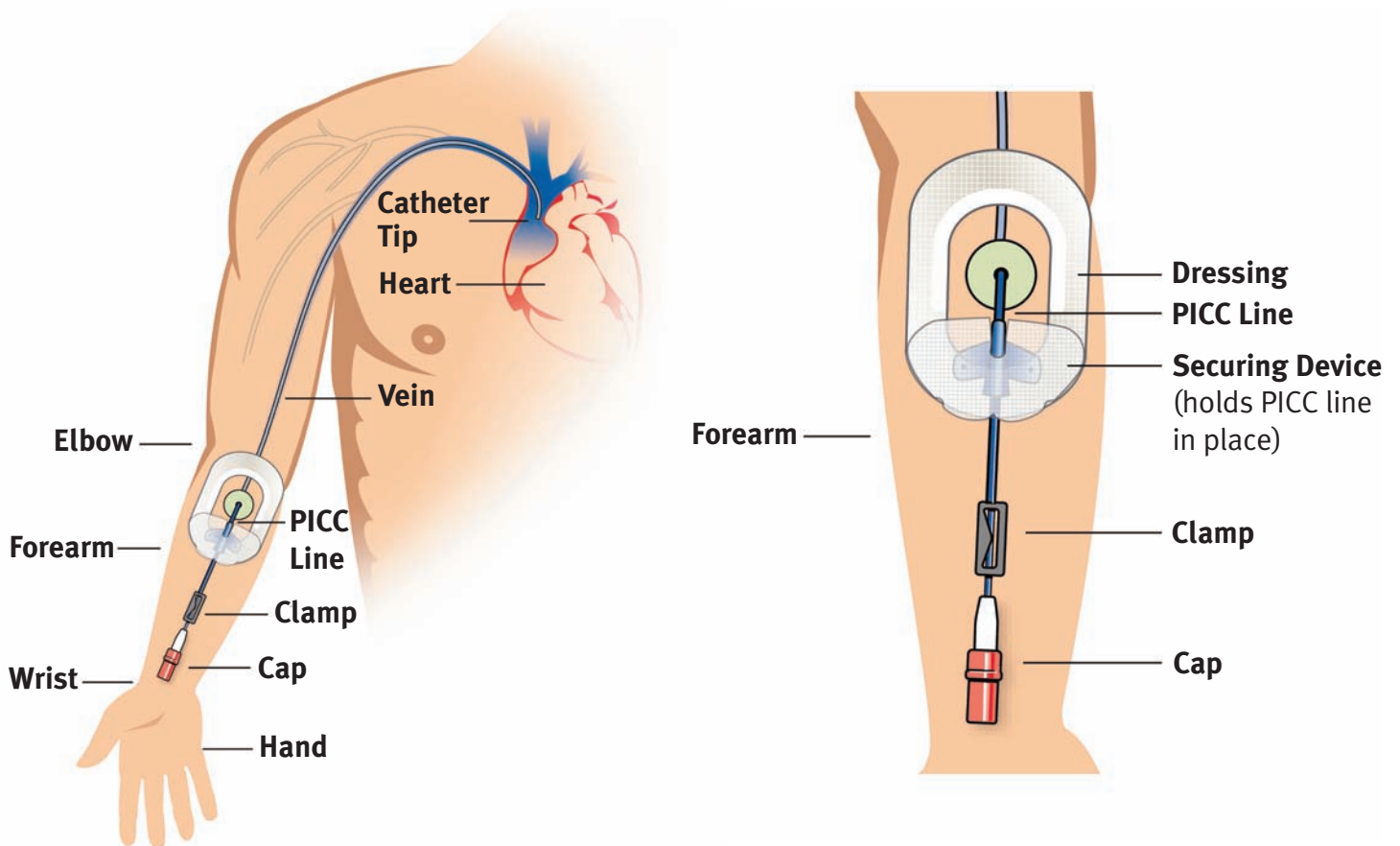
These activities will be taught to you before you leave the hospital and/or at home by the home care nurse. Contact your home care nurse if you or family members are unsure of how to do any of these activities, or have any other questions.

**Remember to wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after completing any of these activities.**



## Understanding Your PICC

These pictures will help you and your family caregiver understand your PICC. Some items in your kit may look different from these pictures. Your home care nurse will go over the items in your kit, and all of this information, with you.



## Activity 1: Protecting the PICC When Showering

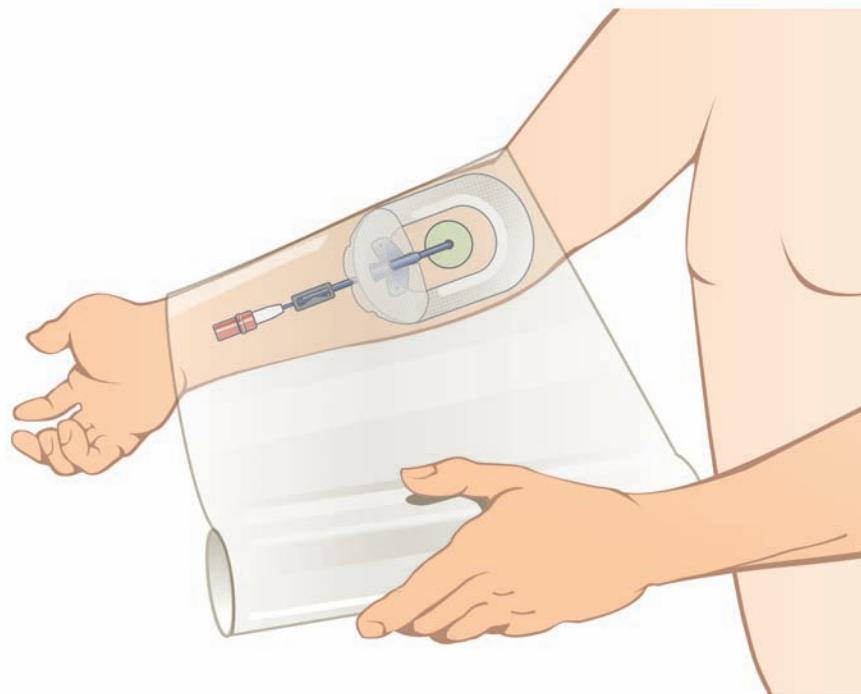
### Things to remember

- Only shower if someone is nearby to help you wrap your arm or change your dressing, in case it becomes wet or loose. It is very important to keep the PICC dressing dry and intact at all times.
- While in the shower, regularly check to make sure the plastic wrap is in place and your device is not getting wet.
- Do not take a tub bath, go into a hot tub, or go swimming.
- Avoid letting any deodorant sprays, perfumes, oils, ointments, creams, lotions, or body powders touch the area or arm with the PICC line.

### Only take a shower if you protect your PICC as follows:

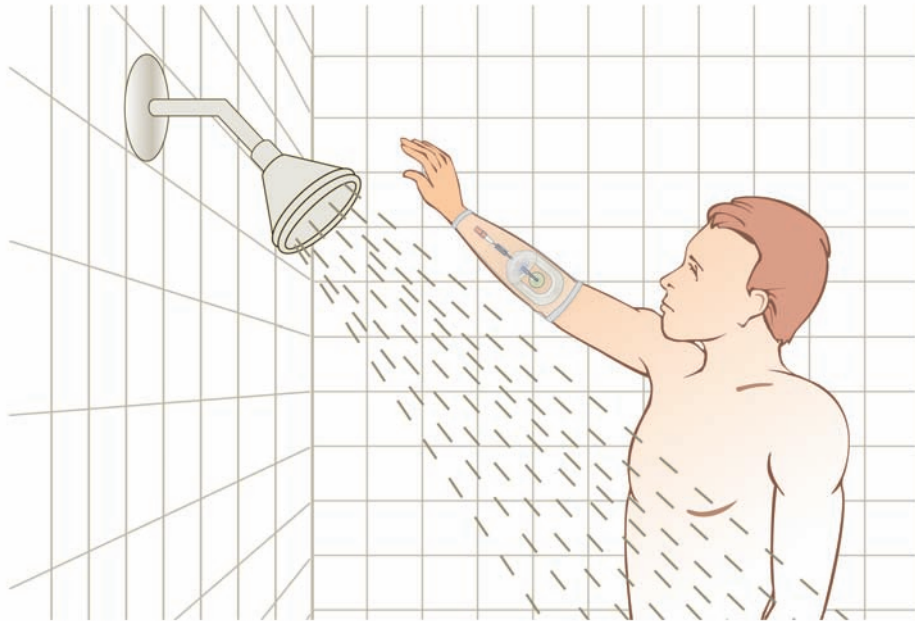
- Discuss with the home care nurse what plastic material you need to cover the arm that has the PICC. There are different options available, such as a shower sleeve or plastic wrap.
- Wrap the PICC site and dressing with the plastic material. Make sure there are no openings or holes in the plastic.

*(Continued)*



## Once you have wrapped your PICC:

- Turn on the shower and make sure water is at the temperature you like.
- If you can, change the direction of the shower head so that the water does not go directly on the site of the PICC.
- Safely step into the shower.



- Raise your arm with the PICC in the air and away from the water.  
**Keep the arm up** during your entire shower to prevent the PICC from getting wet.  
Avoid having any water hit the PICC.
  - You may require some assistance in reaching some parts of your body and in washing your hair.
  - If the PICC dressing becomes wet or loose after taking a shower, the dressing must be changed.
- While in the shower, regularly check to make sure the plastic wrap is in place and your device is not getting wet.
- Finish your shower. Turn off water and safely step out of the shower.
- Dry the plastic around the PICC first, before drying off your body.
- Unwrap and remove plastic from around your arm and throw it away in a plastic garbage bag.

## Activity 2: Flushing the PICC, with or without Giving Medication

Flushing the PICC will keep the catheter from getting clogged, which would prevent fluid from flowing through the tube.

**Flush the catheter before and after medication therapy is given, to keep fluid moving through the PICC into your veins. *Your home care nurse will tell you how often this is to be done.***

The catheter is flushed with sterile saline solution; for some patients, heparin is used. This process should be taught to you by a home care nurse and/or a nurse at the hospital. You should only flush the line if you or your caregiver(s) practiced flushing the line with a nurse and you understand and can do all steps of the flush procedure as outlined below.

**If you and/or your caregiver(s) were not taught how to flush your PICC, you should not perform these activities without the support of your home care nurse.**

**Flushing your PICC is something that should only be done if you or your family member feels comfortable doing so. If you or your family members do not feel comfortable flushing the PICC, contact your home care nurse.**

If your PICC is used to give medication, flush the catheter using a series of steps known as the SASH technique:

S - Saline flush first

A - Administer any medication, following flush

S - Saline flush after administering any medication

H - Heparin flush as the final step

*(Continued)*

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## STEP 1: Gather supplies to flush the PICC and prepare the work surface

### Supplies needed to flush the PICC and give an infusion

- Non-sterile gloves
- Two alcohol pads
- Syringe prefilled with flush solution (normal saline and/or heparin), as reviewed by your home care nurse and recorded below\*
- Infusion medication, treatment, and/or other therapy
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer, if preferred over soap and water
- Plastic- or paper-lined garbage pail, to be used in all steps of this activity



\* Flush with:  
Normal saline \_\_\_\_\_ ml or Heparin \_\_\_\_\_ ml

### Supplies needed to prepare the work surface

- Disinfectant wipe or a germ-killing product, such as a bleach-based product, and reusable cloth
- Plastic-lined garbage pail

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## STEP 2: Prepare the work surface

- Clean the surface with the germ-killing product and cloth or with a disinfectant wipe.
- Let the surface air dry.
- Throw away any used disinfectant wipes in a plastic garbage bag. If reusable cloths are used, wash them in hot water with a bleach-based product and dry in a dryer on the hot cycle.

*(Continued)*

### STEP 3: Flush your PICC before starting infusion

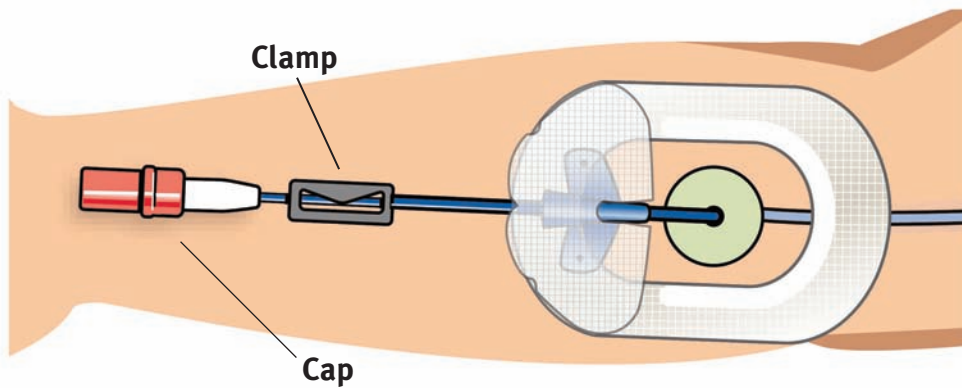
*If your PICC has more than one infusion line, flush each line following these instructions.*

- Check labels for:
  - Name of infusion solution
  - Expiration date
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 15 to 20 seconds and then rinse, dry with a paper towel, and throw the paper towel in the garbage. If you use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, rub your hands together to spread the solution to all parts of your hands and in between fingers, and allow to air dry; this should take about 20 seconds.
- Put on non-sterile gloves.
- Remove flush solution from package.
- Check for air bubbles in the syringe. If you see air bubbles:
  - Point the syringe upward;
  - Loosen but do not remove the cap on the syringe;
  - Slowly press the plunger on the syringe until you see the air bubble pushed out;
  - Retighten the cap on the syringe.

*(Step 3 continues)*







- Disinfect cap(s) using an alcohol pad. Wipe cap(s) using a left to right motion for **at least 15 seconds**. Allow to air dry for 15 seconds. Throw away used alcohol pad in plastic garbage bag.
- Unclamp the clamp. This is the device that stops fluid from coming out of the PICC.
- Remove the cap from the syringe and throw away in plastic garbage bag. Make sure the clean end of the needleless connector doesn't touch anything while you are doing this. Attach the syringe with the flush solution to the line.
- Carefully push the syringe into the cap and twist it in using a clockwise (turning to the right) direction until the syringe feels secure.
- Squeeze the syringe chamber to allow flush medication to flow into the line(s). If you are not able to inject the fluid, stop and make sure the tubing is not twisted. **If you are still not able to flush the line with the fluid, do not use extra pressure. Remove the syringe, re-clamp your catheter, and call your doctor or home care nurse.**
- If not going on to infuse medication, re-clamp the clamp after flushing.
- Clean surface with germ-killing product.
- Take off gloves and throw away in plastic garbage bag.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 15 to 20 seconds and then rinse your hands, dry with a paper towel, and throw the paper towel in the garbage. If you use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer instead, rub your hands together to spread the solution to all parts of your hands and in between fingers, and allow to air dry; this should take about 20 seconds.

*(Continued)*

## STEP 4: Giving an infusion treatment

For patients requiring infusion treatment, after the flushing process has been completed follow the steps below. These steps should be done only by patients and/or family caregivers who have been trained, or by the home care nurse.

***Before beginning these activities, be sure to follow the steps for washing your hands, and put on gloves as instructed in Step 3 on page 11. Then:***

- Check medication, treatment, and/or other therapy labels.
- Disinfect cap(s) using an alcohol pad. Wipe cap(s) using a left to right motion for **at least 15 seconds**. Allow to air dry. Throw away used alcohol pad in plastic garbage bag.
- Attach the primary line (the line that contains the medication and/or other treatment) and control the flow of the infusion using the clamp located on the infusion line.

### **When the infusion is complete:**

- Clamp the infusion line.
- Disconnect the line from the PICC.
- Disinfect cap(s) using an alcohol pad. Wipe cap(s) using a left to right motion for **at least 15 seconds**. Allow to air dry. Throw away used alcohol pad in plastic garbage bag.
- Remove the cap from the syringe and throw away in plastic garbage bag. Make sure the clean end of the needleless connector doesn't touch anything while you are doing this. Attach the syringe with the flush solution to the line. Note: *If your PICC has more than one infusion line, flush each line according to these instructions.*
- Carefully push the syringe into the cap and twist it in using a clockwise (turning to the right) direction until the syringe feels secure.
- Squeeze the syringe chamber to allow flush medication to flow into the line(s). If you are not able to inject the fluid, stop and make sure the tubing is not twisted.
- Re-clamp the clamp.
- Clean surface with a germ-killing product or disinfectant wipe.
- Take off gloves and throw away in plastic garbage bag.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 15 to 20 seconds and then rinse your hands, dry with a paper towel, and throw the paper towel in the garbage. If you use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, rub your hands together to spread the solution to all parts of your hands and in between fingers and allow to air dry; this should take about 20 seconds.

## Appendix. Changing the PICC Dressing

### Overview

The dressing protects your PICC. It is important to keep the dressing dry and in place at all times. Your PICC dressing changes can be done by you and your family caregiver(s) *once you have been trained*, or by your home care nurse.

1	2	3 <i>change dressing</i>	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 <i>change dressing</i>	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 <i>change dressing</i>	18	19	20	21
22	23	24 <i>change dressing</i>	25	26	27	28
29	30	31 <i>change dressing</i>				

### Important points to remember

- Change the dressing every 7 days, or whenever the dressing gets dirty, wet, or becomes loose.
- Only change the dressing if someone is nearby to help you.
- If the PICC moves, or if the area becomes red around the insertion site (the place where the PICC enters the skin), get immediate medical attention.

***If you or your family caregiver(s) do not feel comfortable changing the PICC dressing, contact your home infusion nurse.***

## **STEP 1: Gather supplies to prepare the work surface and change your dressing**

You will receive a kit that includes all or some of the items listed below. Your home care nurse will review the items with you.

### **Supplies needed to prepare the work surface**

- Germ-killing product (example: a bleach-based product)
- Cloth or disinfectant wipe
- Plastic- or paper-lined garbage pail (will be needed for all steps of this activity)

### **Supplies needed to remove the old PICC dressing**

- A pair of non-sterile gloves (the kind that come in a box)
- Two alcohol pads
- Plastic- or paper-lined garbage pail

### **Supplies needed to change the dressing**

- Transparent (clear) PICC dressing
- A disk containing chlorohexidine-gluconate, to be placed around the catheter site to keep it from becoming infected
- A device to secure the PICC, and a securement adhesive prep pad
- PICC end cap
- A pair of non-sterile gloves
- A pair of *sterile* gloves (these come in a sealed package)
- At least two alcohol prep pads
- At least two chlorohexidine-gluconate swabs or swab sticks
- At least two pieces of sterile gauze
- Sterile paper drape

*(Continued)*

## STEP 2: Prepare the work surface

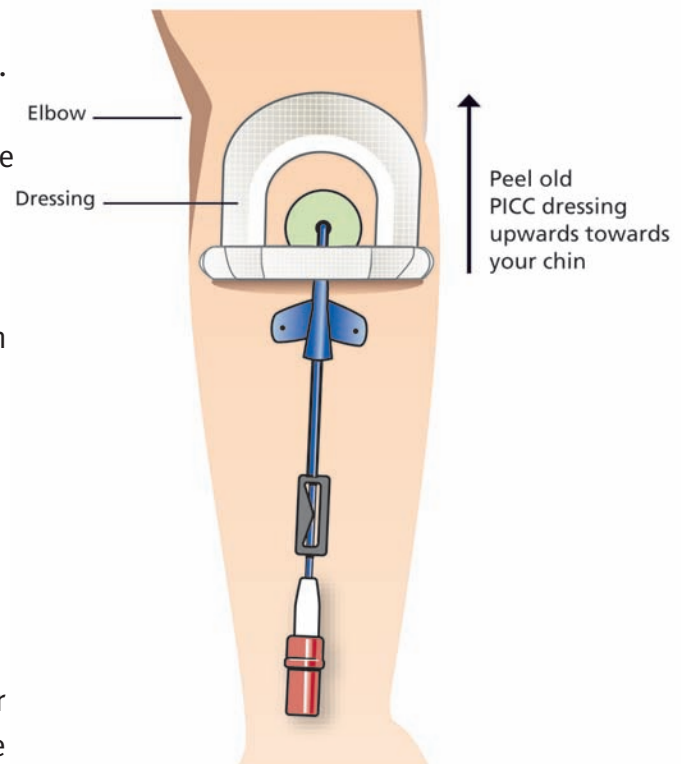
- Clean the surface with germ-killing product (such as a bleach-based solution), using a disinfectant wipe.
- Let the surface air dry.
- Throw away any used disposable wipes in a plastic garbage bag. If you are using reusable cloths, wash them in hot water with a bleach-based product and dry in a dryer on the hot cycle.

## STEP 3: Remove the old PICC dressing

**You and your family caregiver are now ready to remove the old PICC dressing.**

- Put on non-sterile gloves.
- Start by loosening the edges of the dressing.  
An alcohol pad can be used to help loosen the edges. Carefully peel from the lower edge up to the top of the dressing (towards your chin), while holding the PICC at the point where it enters the skin with the other gloved hand. This prevents the catheter from being pulled out.
- Begin to peel off the old transparent dressing. Throw away the used dressing in a plastic garbage bag.
- Remove the gloves you were wearing and throw them away in a plastic garbage bag.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 15 to 20 seconds and then rinse your hands, dry with a paper towel, and throw the paper towel in the garbage. If you use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, rub your hands together to spread the solution to all parts of your hands and between your fingers and allow to air dry; this should take about 20 seconds.

*(Continued)*



## STEP 4: Examine the PICC before putting on a new dressing

- If the skin looks swollen or reddened, or is draining any fluid or pus, **cover the skin with clean gauze and tape** and then immediately call your doctor or home care nurse for instructions on what to do next. If unable to contact your doctor or home care nurse, go to your local emergency room.
  
- If the catheter seems to be coming out or more of the tubing is showing than it did in the past, continue with the dressing change as described below. Call your doctor or home care nurse for instructions on what to do next. If unable to contact your doctor or home care nurse, go to your local emergency room.

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## STEP 5: Prepare the skin for a new (sterile) dressing

### Preparing the skin around the PICC

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 15 to 20 seconds and then rinse your hands, dry with a paper towel, and throw the paper towel in the garbage. If using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, rub your hands together to spread the solution to all parts of your hands and allow to air dry; this should take about 20 seconds.
- Put on a new pair of sterile gloves: touch only the turned-up inside cuff of one glove, slip on the glove, and then pick up and put on the second glove.
- Remove sterile paper drape (sheet) from kit and place under the arm below the catheter. **Do not let your gloves touch the arm or the catheter.**
- Remove chlorhexidine-gluconate swab or swab stick from kit:
  - If a swab stick is used, squeeze the swab stick to release the liquid chlorhexidine-gluconate.
- Place swab or swab stick onto the skin and make sure the liquid soaks the area around where the catheter exits the skin for at least 30 seconds, or according to manufacturer's instructions. Using a left to right motion, gently scrub the entire area covered by the transparent PICC dressing for at least 30 seconds or according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Let liquid chlorhexidine-gluconate air dry for 30 seconds or until area is completely dry. **Do not blow on the site to help speed up the drying time.**
- Throw away the swab or swab stick in the plastic garbage bag.
- Pick up the chlorhexidine-gluconate disk and open it at the slit.

*(Step 5 continues)*

- Holding the chlorohexidine-gluconate disk with the sponge side down, fit snugly around the PICC line at the point where it enters the skin. The instructions that come with the disk will explain which side goes against the skin and how to place it; your home care nurse will review this with you.

## Preparing the skin for the securement device

Next, prepare the skin for the device that will be used to secure the catheter to your skin:

- Pick up the adhesive skin prep pad and open it. Use it to wipe the area where you will apply the securement device. Allow the skin to dry completely.
- While holding the new securement device, place the wing section of the catheter into the securement device and snap both sides closed.
- Next, peel off the paper backing and place the securement device on the prepped area.

**Your home care nurse will show you how to do this step using the items in your kit.**

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## STEP 6: Put on the new PICC dressing (the final step)

**You are now ready to put on the new dressing.**

- Peel off the paper backing of the transparent dressing.
- Hold the dressing so that the “V” notch is opposite the PICC insertion site. Place it on the arm so that it covers both the chlorohexidine-gluconate and the securement device.
- Using one hand, peel off the outer paper cover, while sealing the edges of the dressing with your other hand.
- Make sure the transparent dressing completely covers the insertion site and securement device.
- Remove and throw away gloves in plastic garbage bag.
- Clean work surface using a germ-killing product.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 15 to 20 seconds, then rinse your hands, dry with a paper towel, and throw the paper towel in the garbage. If using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, rub your hands together to spread the solution to all parts of your hands and allow to air dry; this should take about 20 seconds.

**Your home care nurse will show you how to do this concluding step using the items in your kit.**