



## Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter

### Introduction

This booklet has been written to provide information to patients having a peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC) in order to receive treatment. It is not meant to replace the discussion between you and the team treating you, but helps you to understand more about what is discussed.

### What is a PICC?

A PICC is a thin flexible tube that is used to give you treatments such as chemotherapy, antibiotics, intravenous (IV) fluids, medication and/or nutrition. A PICC can also be used for taking blood samples. A PICC can remain in position for the whole duration of your treatment. A PICC exchange maybe required if duration of treatment exceeds manufacturer's recommended time of use.

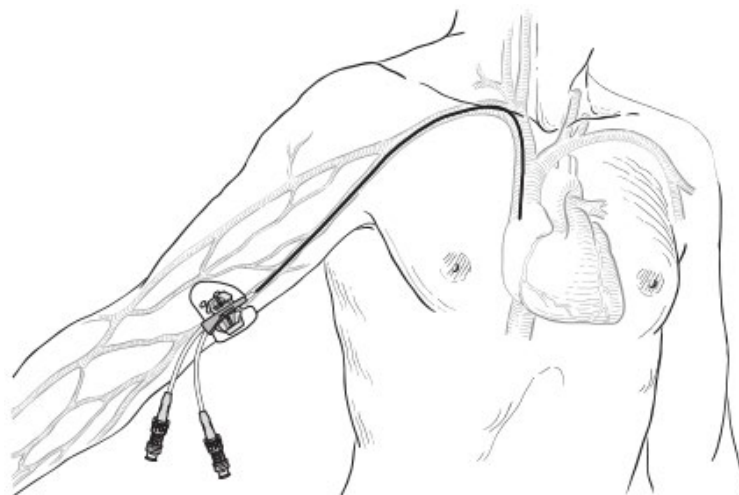
### Why am I having a PICC inserted?

A PICC is ideal for people who:

- Have experienced difficult insertion with cannulas.
- Need cancer treatment or liquid nutrition (parenteral nutrition).
- Need medications that are very irritating or damaging to the veins (Strong antibiotics).

### Whereabouts in my body is a PICC inserted?

A PICC is inserted into a vein, usually in the mid inner part of your upper arm. The PICC is then inserted so that the tip lies in one of the large veins in the chest just above the heart, as shown in the drawing below.



### How is a PICC inserted?

A specially trained Practitioner or Doctor will assess your vein using an ultrasound machine, a tight band (called tourniquet) may be used around your arms to make your veins stand out. Once a suitable vein is identified, the skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution and a local anaesthetic will be injected to numb your skin.

To place the PICC line, a needle is inserted through your skin and into the vein in your arm. A small incision is made in your skin to allow the catheter to be inserted. If the procedure is being done in your hospital room, the Practitioner or Doctor may use a heart monitoring device (ECG Technology) to confirm the position, if not you might have an X-Ray later. Your PICC line may also be inserted in the X-ray department.

You will need to lie down whilst your PICC is inserted. The procedure should take approximately 40 minutes to an hour. The PICC will be held in place with a stabilisation device and/or anchoring device to secure PICCs (called a Statlock, Grip-lok™ and/or a SecurAcath® device) and covered with a transparent, waterproof dressing.

### What are the benefits of having a PICC inserted?

A PICC will prevent you from receiving several needles throughout the course of your treatment. This will prevent long-term damage to your veins due to irritation caused by receiving intravenous medication.

### What are the main risks following the insertion of a PICC?

As with most procedures there is a small risk of complications, which may include:

#### Bleeding/Bruising

After a PICC insertion, the exit site may bleed. This will be observed whilst you are in hospital and a pressure dressing may be applied to control this. You will only be allowed home when bleeding has stopped. You may also be left with some bruising around the site of insertion. If you have any concerns, please raise this with a healthcare professional.

#### Infection

It is possible for an infection to develop inside the PICC and/or around the site where it has been inserted. You may be given antibiotics and/or a PICC removal is required if the infection is serious.

#### Blood clots

It is possible for a blood clot (thrombosis) to form in your vein around or at the tip of the PICC. If a clot does form, your PICC may have to be removed. You may also be given some medication to dissolve the clot.

#### Blockage

It is possible for your PICC to become blocked permanently and this will require removal. You may be given some medication to unblock the PICC to restore its function.

#### Incorrect position of the catheter tip

The catheter position will be confirmed by either a heart monitor (ECG Technology) or a chest X-ray and may need to be removed or repositioned if required. It will be recorded in your notes how much of the PICC should be exposed from the skin. Please do not try to push the PICC in yourself if you believe that it has been pulled out further than it should be. Contact your health professionals as soon as possible.

### Nerve Injury

Sitting closely to your veins are nerves. Occasionally we may irritate these nerves. However, if the PICC continues to cause discomfort, that does not settle within 24- 48 hours, the PICC will have to be removed.

### Break or cut in the PICC

It is important that you do not get a break or cut in your PICC. Do not use scissors near the PICC and only use the clamp that is supplied (some PICCs do not have a clamp). If the PICC does split or become damaged, try to clamp or kink it above the cut nearest to the exit site and call your hospital. Your PICC may need to be removed or exchanged if it cannot be repaired.

### SecurAcath Migration

PICC can also be placed and secured with an anchor device to prevent it from coming out specially during dressing changes. There's a small chance that the anchor device can move away from its original position in the skin.

### Symptoms to look out for that needs reporting.

If you suspect something is wrong, or if you have any of the following symptoms:

- A temperature above 38°C fever, chills or feeling generally unwell. This could be the beginning of an infection.
- Oozing or discoloured fluid coming from around the PICC
- Cracks or leaks
- Pain, redness or swelling around the site
- Sudden shortness of breath
- If your PICC becomes dislodged

**Please contact the hospital or the team looking after you straight away if you have any concerns.**

### Are there any alternatives to having a PICC?

A PICC has been recommended as the most appropriate way to deliver your treatment. Alternative types of catheters are available depending on its duration and use. Please ask your nursing or medical team if you would like more information about these.

### What are the consequences of having a PICC?

Once the PICC has been removed, you may have a very small scar on your arm where it was inserted. There may be scarring to the vein in which your PICC was inserted. This will heal in time and will cause no long-term effects.

### What do I need to do before the insertion of my PICC?

You may be required to have a blood test (if it has not already been done) to ensure that your blood will clot normally after having the line inserted. If for any reason these are out of the normal ranges, advice will be sought from your medical team where benefits outweigh the risks of bleeding decision will be made.

## Information for Patients

---

Please try to wear loose clothing on the day, (preferably a short-sleeved top) and try to drink plenty of water the day before or morning of your PICC insertion (if you can). You may be required to get changed into a hospital gown, however having loose clothing will aid in easier changing without accidentally pulling the line.

### What do I need to do after insertion of my PICC?

Sometimes you may have some tenderness, swelling or inflammation of the upper arm where your PICC was inserted. This reaction is most common in the first week following insertion. If you have any tenderness or pain in your arm, taking a simple painkiller such as Paracetamol may help. However, please note it is important that you check your temperature before doing this. If the pain persists, telephone your hospital for advice.

### Who will care for my PICC?

The dressing will need to be changed every 7 days or if it becomes soiled or loosen, this will either be done by the hospital department or occasionally can be arranged with the district nursing team. Whilst you are in hospital, the nursing staff will look after your PICC. This involves:

- Cleaning the site where the PICC leaves your arm, replacing the caps/bungs/needle-free connectors, statlock and applying a new dressing (weekly)
- Flushing the PICC to prevent blocking when it is not in use (we do this as a minimum once a week).

Your PICC will need to be cared for as it will be in place for several weeks. We will arrange for community nurses or the hospital nurse to care for the catheter.

### Removal of your PICC

When you no longer need your PICC, a member of the nursing staff will remove it. The line will be gently removed, and the insertion site will be covered with a dressing.

### Frequently asked questions:

#### Can I eat and drink before having my PICC inserted?

Yes, you can eat and drink normally before having your PICC inserted.

#### Can I have a bath/shower or swim with a PICC in place?

As a rule, we encourage people with a PICC to take a shower. This is preferable to submerging your PICC in bath water because of the risk of infection. However, having a shallow bath and keeping the line out of the water is also fine.

Waterproof coverings are available to protect the PICC whilst showering. If you would like to know more about this, please speak to a member of staff.

Swimming should be avoided whilst your PICC is in place.

#### Can I lead a normal social life?

Having a PICC in place should not interfere with your social life. However, your treatment may temporarily restrict certain social activities. Your nurse or doctor will give you more specific information.

## Information for Patients

---

### Can I play sports?

There is a risk that your PICC could become dislodged because of excessive upper body movement. Vigorous exercises are discouraged whilst your PICC is in place. Non-contact or gentle exercise should be fine. However, if you experience any pain or problems, please check with your nurse.

### Can I go on holiday?

Please talk to your doctor before planning a trip abroad. It is possible to go on holiday abroad with a PICC in place. However, you need to consider the type of treatment you are having, the duration and destination of your holiday, and whether you have someone to help care for your PICC. If you do travel by air, carry all medication, and a letter from the medical team, in your hand luggage.

### How soon can the PICC be used once inserted?

The PICC can normally be used immediately post insertion, to administer your intravenous therapy.

### Glossary of medical terms:

**Anchoring device:** a special dressing (called a Griplik) or a SecurAcath will be used to secure PICCs.

**Antibiotics:** are used to treat or prevent some type of bacterial infection. PICC is recommended when administering antibiotics with extremes pH and high osmolarity.

**Anticoagulant:** any substance that prevents blood clotting.

**Blood count:** a test that gives information about the cells in a patient's blood.

**Community nurse:** a nurse that can visit you in your own home.

**ECG technology:** relies on the transmission of the electrocardiographic signal at the tip of the catheter allowing the system to identify its tip location against the cavo-atrial junction through internal P-wave amplitude modulation.

**Flushing:** passing liquid through a PICC when it is not being used, via a syringe, to prevent it from becoming blocked.

**Intravenous:** the administration of liquid substances directly into a vein.

**PICC:** a PICC is a thin flexible tube that is used to give you treatments such as chemotherapy, antibiotics, intravenous (IV) fluids, medications and/or nutrition. A PICC can also be used for taking blood samples.

**SecurAcath:** a securement device to prevent or reduce chances of dislodgement.

**Tourniquet:** is a band that is tied around your arm to make your veins stand out

**Ultrasound:** imaging equipment that uses high-frequency sound waves to create an image to guide the initial insertion of a PICC

**If you have any questions you may want to ask about your condition or your treatment or if there is anything you do not understand and you wish to know more about, please write them down and your doctor will be more than happy to try and answer them for you.**

---

## Information for Patients

---

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email [interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk)