

Your Health Education

Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

What is a PICC?

A peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC) is a thin, flexible tube inserted in a vein in the upper arm. The PICC is used to get samples of your blood. You can also get fluids, medicines, and nutrients through it.

When you have a PICC in place, your skin doesn't need to be pricked every time the doctors need to check your blood or give you medicines or fluids.

How Will the PICC Be Placed?

The PICC may be placed in either arm and advanced into the vein above the heart.

The PICC is placed by someone specially trained in the procedure:

- Registered nurse
- Doctor
- Physician assistant
- Nurse practitioner
- Radiology staff

First, your skin will be carefully cleaned at the place where the PICC will go in. The doctor or nurse will put a special needle through the skin. The catheter will be threaded through this needle to place it in the right spot. A portion of the catheter will remain outside your body. The catheter will be taped in place. A sterile dressing will be put on the entry site.

If electrocardiogram (ECG) technology confirms that the PICC tip is properly positioned, a chest x-ray will not be required. ECG technology cannot be used if you have a pacemaker, atrial fibrillation/flutter, or any other heart rhythm that is not suitable for the ECG technology. If an x-ray is required, the PICC will not be used until a radiologist verifies that the PICC line is properly placed.

What Will Happen After the Procedure?

Nurses will care for the catheter. They will change the dressing every seven days. Tell your nurse if the dressing becomes soiled or loosened, or if your skin around the catheter becomes red or painful.

The catheter will be flushed routinely to be sure the line stays open. You will receive more information about home care of the catheter if you need it.

Any Questions?

If you have any questions regarding the PICC, please ask your nurse or doctor.