

Patient Information

Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

What is PICC?

A PICC is a fine flexible tube approximately 60cm (2ft) long made of silicon. It is inserted through one of the small veins in the arm and threaded through until the tip lies in a large vein in your chest.

A specially trained nurse will insert your PICC.

Why do I need a PICC?

There are various reasons for having a PICC:

- Sometimes it is difficult to insert a plastic needle (cannula) into some people's veins. This is often due to previous use.
- Some chemotherapy drugs are given continuously using a small pump/infusor and a PICC allows you to go home with this attached.
- Some people require drugs to be given into a vein for a few weeks or months, and a PICC enables this to be done without repeated needles/cannulae.

What happens during the procedure?

- During the procedure you will have to lie flat (a nurse will discuss the alternatives with you if you are unable to lie flat), with your arm extended from your side.
- Some gel will be applied to the skin on the inside of your upper arm and the ultrasound probe will be moved across the skin.
- A needle, similar to the one used to insert a drip, will be put into the vein above the elbow.
- A small injection of local anaesthetic will then be given under the skin. This will sting for a few seconds.
- You may then experience a feeling of pressure in your arm for a few moments.
- The PICC is then gently threaded through the vein until it reaches the large vein in your chest. At this time you will be asked to turn your head towards your arm.
- The PICC is then secured in place with a dressing.
- An x-ray of your chest will be taken to make sure that the PICC is in the right position.

When will my PICC need redressing?

A small adhesive pad and see-through dressing are used. This is changed weekly.

You will be asked to come back the next day to have the dressing changed and check your arm for signs of redness. It may be possible to arrange a nurse to visit you if it is difficult for you to return.

What can I do and what should I avoid?

You will be able to move your arm normally with the PICC in place. You may bath or shower, but avoid getting the dressing wet - your nurse will advise you on how.

You must not swim. Take care when attending to pets or children. Take care when using scissors or other sharp objects.

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The chemotherapy drugs are usually toxic so it is important to protect your PICC at all times.

Your nurse will arrange for the weekly flush of your PICC. If you or your carer would like to learn how to care for your PICC, your nurse will be happy to discuss this with you.

What are the potential risks and side effects?

It is quite common for the arm to become red in the first week after the PICC has been inserted; if this happens please contact the hospital. To prevent this redness, you should place a hot pack (covered hot water bottle or similar) on the upper arm for 20 minutes three times a day for the first five days.

There is a small risk of infection.

On rare occasions a blockage, or clot, may form around the PICC. The signs and symptoms of this are described on page three (When should I contact the hospital?), and should be reported immediately.

Although you will sign a consent form for this treatment, you may at any time after that withdraw such consent. Please discuss this with your medical team.

What are the alternatives?

If you feel that a PICC is not the right choice for you, a skin-tunnelled catheter may be an alternative. Please talk to the nurse about this option.

When should I contact the hospital?

If you notice any of the following:

- Your arm becomes swollen or discoloured.
- Any redness or discharge from around the PICC.
- Any fluid or white powder under or around the PICC dressing.
- Your PICC seems longer.
- You are feverish or become unwell.
- Any sudden shortness of breath, shoulder or chest pain.

When is the PICC removed?

The PICC will be removed as soon as your treatment is finished. This is a very simple procedure that only takes a few minutes and will be done by one of the nurses on the day unit.

Sources of information

Conquest Hospital

McCartney Day Unit (Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm), Telephone (01424) 757030
Newington Ward (when the McCartney Day Unit is closed), Telephone (01424) 758043
Annette Darling, Haematology Nurse, Telephone (01424) 755255 ext 8647 / Bleep 2409

Eastbourne District General Hospital

Pevensey Ward, Telephone (01323) 435866
Rose Errington, Oncology Nurse Telephone (01323) 417400 Bleep 0669

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Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) – details below.

Hand hygiene

The trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

This information is available in alternative formats such as large print or electronically on request. Interpreters can also be booked. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offices, found in the main reception areas:

Conquest Hospital

Email: palsh@esht.nhs.uk - Telephone: **01424 758090**

Eastbourne District General Hospital

Email: palse@esht.nhs.uk - Telephone: **01323 435886**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Dr Richard Grace, Consultant (Haematology/Blood Transfusion)

Annette Darling, Haematology Nurse

Date agreed: November 2011

Review date: November 2013

Responsible clinician: Annette Darling, Haematology Nurse