

PICC– For IV Antibiotics

What is a PICC and what does it do?

A PICC is a *Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter*. It is a thin tube that goes in a vein, usually in your arm just above your elbow. The tube is threaded through the arm vein until the tip lies in one of the large veins in the chest. The PICC can stay in place for several months. Unlike an IV, you can keep the PICC line in place after leaving the hospital. You can then receive IV antibiotics outside the hospital for a long period of time in order to treat severe infection. The IV antibiotics are generally stronger than antibiotic pills. The PICC can also be used to take blood samples for testing.

How will the PICC line be put in?

A trained doctor or nurse will put in the PICC line. For the procedure, you will have to lie down. A doctor or nurse will give you a local anesthetic to numb your skin, and then using a needle, will insert the tube into a vein in your arm. Then the needle will be removed, and the tube will be threaded up through your vein to its final destination near your heart. After the PICC line is in place, the doctor or nurse will tape it to your arm with a special transparent dressing, to keep it from coming out. Then you will have an X-ray of your chest taken so the doctors can check the position of the PICC. Some patients will have sutures placed to stop the PICC from falling out.

Patients who are already in the hospital may get a PICC line before discharge, in order to go home on IV antibiotics. Sometimes patients who are not in the hospital need a PICC line placed. The PICC insertion is usually an outpatient procedure, and you should be able to go home the same day. If you are coming from home, you should expect to spend about 4 hours for the PICC line placement. However, the actual insertion and threading of the tube usually is under a half hour. Patients whose veins are difficult to find may need more time.

Are there any complications I should know about?

The procedure should not cause you any pain. However, like with any procedure, there are risks involved, including bleeding, infection, broken veins, clot, breakage or clogging of the PICC line, or the PICC line falling out.

If you see or feel any of the following, please contact us immediately:

- Fever or general feeling of being sick
- Redness, pain, swelling, or oozing from around the PICC
- Leaks from the PICC, or a PICC that is cracked
- The medicine is no longer entering the PICC line easily

What happens after I leave the hospital with a PICC?

Many people go to a rehabilitation facility for the period of time they are receiving IV antibiotics through the PICC. The nurses in a rehabilitation facility will be able to help you administer the IV antibiotics and clean your PICC and wound. This may mean that you cannot return home anywhere from 2 to 8 weeks or longer, depending on how long you need IV antibiotics. This is the best option for you if you cannot take care of the PICC by yourself at home.

Other patients will go home after nurses teach them or their families how to clean the PICC and administer the IV antibiotics. In order to use the PICC at home, either you or a friend or family member must be able to learn these skills. A nurse will come to your house to provide support.

What if I don't want to get a PICC line?

For some kinds of infections, it may be possible to take oral antibiotics. However, if your doctor has suggested that you get a PICC line, then your infection is very serious and should be treated with IV antibiotics. If you do not get IV antibiotics, your infection may not be cured. If you choose to not get a PICC line, you may be discharged with oral antibiotics, but keep in mind that these may not be successful in fighting the infection.

How is the PICC removed?

The PICC will be taken out of your vein when you no longer need it. This can be done during a routine clinic appointment, or by a nurse at home. To remove the PICC, a doctor or trained nurse will remove any sutures and pull out the tube. This is usually painless, and it takes only a few minutes.

What do I do if I have a question?

If you are confused or have a question regarding your venous stasis ulcer, please call us at 212-932-4325, at any time. You can also find information at our website:

www.ColumbiaWoundHealing.org.