



Having a PICC Line Inserted

This handout offers information on having a Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC) line inserted. It is important for you and your family member/care partner to read this handout before your appointment to have a PICC line inserted..

What is a PICC line?

A PICC line is a long, thin tube inserted into a vein in your arm. It is guided through your blood vessels until it reaches a large vein close to your heart. The PICC line will be used to give you your cancer treatment medications. It can also be used to give you other fluids, such as nutrition or blood products if you need them. Your PICC line may be used to take blood samples if the smaller veins in your arm are hard to find.

Benefits of a PICC line

- Can be used longer than an intravenous (IV) line
A PICC line can stay in place for many weeks or months. This is longer than a regular intravenous (IV) line.
- Safer for certain medications
Some medications can damage your smaller veins. A PICC line safely delivers medications into one of your larger veins.
- Reliable access
It is easier for the healthcare team to give you intravenous medications or take blood using a PICC line if the smaller veins in your arms are hard to find.

Appointment to have your PICC line inserted

A clerk will call you with an appointment to have your PICC line inserted.

You will need to check in at the reception desk of the Diagnostic Imaging Department for this appointment. The Diagnostic Imaging Department is in the N wing on the main level of Lakeridge Health – Oshawa site. You will be in the hospital for about 1 hour for this appointment.

Having your PICC line inserted

You will be asked to lay down on an x-ray table. Your arm will be cleaned. A numbing medication may be injected into the area where the PICC line will be inserted. This is done using a small needle. The x-ray technologist will use an ultrasound or x-ray to show images of your blood vessels. This helps with the insertion of your PICC line into the correct vein. A sterile dressing is placed over the insertion site (the place on your arm where the PICC line enters your vein). An x-ray image will be taken to make sure the PICC line tip is in the correct position in a vein in your chest.

After your PICC line is inserted

- You might have some bleeding and mild discomfort or tenderness at the site where your PICC line was inserted. This can last for 1 to 3 days.
- Keep the dressing (bandage) clean and dry. This dressing stays on for 7 days before it is changed. A nurse will give you the information you need about this dressing change.
- Your dressing must stay dry after your PICC line is inserted. A wet dressing may put you at risk of infection. You can take a shower or bath. You need to cover the PICC line and dressing with a 'PICC line shower cover' (available at medical supply companies or on Amazon) to keep it from getting wet. You cannot swim or go into a hot tub while you have a PICC line. Call your nurse (the visiting nurse or Primary Nurse at the cancer centre) if your dressing is wet, dirty or is falling off. You need an appointment to have the dressing changed.
- A sterile end cap will be placed on the hub (end) of your PICC line. This keeps the PICC line closed when it is not being used. Call your healthcare team if your end cap becomes loose, comes off, or is leaking. The end cap will be changed by a nurse during a dressing change.
- You can safely bend your arm and use it for everyday activities.
- Keep the PICC line tubing under your clothing to prevent pulling on the tubing during daily activities. Wear loose-fitting long sleeves.
- Do not lift or carry anything over 5 pounds (2.2 kilograms).
- Do not carry objects held in the bend of your arm (example: grocery bag) that may put strain on the PICC line or the dressing.
- Do not let anyone play or pull on the PICC line. Keep pets away from your PICC line.
- Do not have your blood pressure measured or have blood work taken using a needle on the arm where your PICC line is.

Go to a walk-in clinic or the Emergency Department at the hospital closest to you if you have any of these symptoms:

- A fever above 38.3° C/100.9°F at any time or above 38.0° C/100.4°F for more than an hour.
- Swelling and/or pain in your arm, neck, or face on the same side as the PICC line.
- Redness, rash or persistent itchy sensation under the dressing covering your PICC line site.
- Bleeding or drainage (yellow or green) from your PICC line site.
- Your PICC line becomes kinked.
- Your PICC line seems longer than normal or falls out.

Call 911 or go to the Emergency Department at the hospital closest to you if you develop chest pain, shortness of breath, feel light-headed or for any other medical emergency.

If you have a problem or concern about a symptom or side effect from your cancer treatment:

1. Call your Primary Nurse at the cancer centre from Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4 pm (except on holidays). Use the phone number your Primary Nurse gave you.
2. Contact CareChart Digital Health from Monday to Friday, 4 pm to 8:30 am and anytime on weekends and holidays for symptom management support.

Talk to a nurse using one of these options:

- Call the after-hours telephone line at 1-877-681-3057.
- Request a video call by going to carechart.ca.
- Use the CareChart Digital Health App. This App is available to download for iOS or Android devices.

Talk to a member of your healthcare team if you have questions or do not understand any of the information in this handout.

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