

PATIENT INFORMATION

Peripherally Inserted Catheters and Midlines

A PICC is a peripherally inserted central catheter. It is a thin flexible tube that is inserted into a vein in your arm. The PICC is then threaded so that the tip lies in one of the large veins in the chest. This allows you to be able to receive intravenous therapy as well as to have blood samples taken without the need for repeated needle sticks in your arms. It can remain in position for up to twelve months.

A Midline is a similar catheter which is shorter in length and used only for administration of intravenous therapy. It cannot be used for blood sampling. It can remain in position for 4- 6 weeks.

Why do I need to have one?

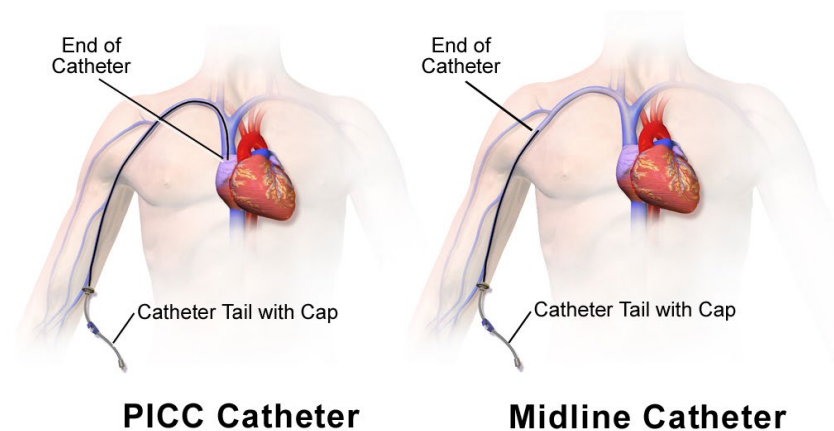
A PICC is ideal for people who:

- Require intravenous drugs that have to be given into a central vein
- Have small veins which are difficult to find or access
- Are very anxious about needles
- Need continuous IV drug therapy
- Need very regular blood sampling and blood products

A Midline will be used if you do not require very regular blood sampling and blood products.

A PICC or Midline can be used for administering all drugs that would normally be given into a vein in your arm or hand. A PICC can also be used for taking all your blood samples. If the line is a designated TPN line (feeding line) it will not be possible to use it for blood sampling.

The illustration below shows where a PICC and Midline catheter enter the vein in the arm. The tip of the PICC is in a large vein just above the Heart and the tip of the Midline is in a vein at the top of the arm.



How is it put in?

A specially trained nurse will insert your PICC or Midline. The procedure will be explained to you in full and you will be given the opportunity to ask any questions before the consent process.

- The nurse will give a local anaesthetic injection at the start of the procedure; this should ensure that the procedure is less painful. If this is not appropriate the nurse will explain why.
- You will need to lie down while your PICC is inserted.
- The area on your arm will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution.
- A needle will be inserted into the vein in your arm with the use of ultrasound.
- The guide wire is threaded into the needle, the needle is removed and an introducer is inserted over the wire into the vein. The guide wire is removed prior to threading the line.
- You will be asked to put your chin on your shoulder to help the line go the right way.
- The line will be flushed with sterile salty water to check it works.
- The introducer is removed and the line will be held in place with a clear, moisture proof dressing.

The procedure should take approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour.

After your PICC is inserted, you will have a chest x-ray to confirm that your line is in the correct position. A Midline does not require a chest x-ray. The total length of stay in hospital for this procedure is approximately 2½ hours. We will need to check your PICC or Midline and change the dressing the day after insertion.

What are the risks of having a PICC inserted?

There are some risks associated with the insertion of the line, however it must be stressed that all these complications are rare:

- Failure to insert the line or incorrect position. If this happens, we will discuss the alternatives with you.
- Mild inflammation/ache of the arm above the insertion site. We advise you to apply heat to the arm for 30 minutes, four times a day for 1-2 weeks post insertion.
- There is a risk of developing a blood clot in the vein that the line is placed in. This would cause swelling in the arm and sometimes pain in the arm, shoulder or neck. If this happens you will need an ultrasound and will be given medication to dissolve the clot. Your line may or may not be removed.
- There is a risk of infection around the exit site or inside the line. You must report any redness, tenderness or discoloured fluid under the dressing to nursing staff. **You must report any temperatures immediately.** You may need antibiotics or your line may have to be removed.
- There is a risk your line may become blocked; this can be treated with drugs depending on the type and extent of the blockage. Occasionally the blockage is not treatable and the line is removed.
- Bleeding around the site is normal but the dressing will need changing if blood leaks out from underneath the dressing.
- Your line may become dislodged. It is acceptable for the line to move in or out by 3cm. If it moves any more than this you will need to contact your nursing team.
- If the line is not clamped properly or if the line gets cut there is a risk of air travelling up the line into your blood. Never use sharp instruments near your line.
- **If your line gets cut; pinch or clamp it off between your arm and the cut then contact your nursing team immediately. If you are unable to make contact immediately, attend the A&E department urgently.**

What do I need to look out for after insertion of my PICC or Midline?

Sometimes you may have some tenderness, swelling or inflammation of the upper arm above where the PICC was inserted. **This is normal and the reaction is most common in the first week** following insertion. To minimise these reactions, you can do light arm exercises and apply warm compresses for thirty minutes, four times a day for two weeks as a preventative measure.

Also, if you have any tenderness or pain in your arm, applying a topical anti-inflammatory such as Ibuprofen or taking a simple painkiller such as paracetamol may help. If the pain persists contact your nursing team.

Taking care of my PICC or Midline

Your PICC or Midline will need care to ensure it is kept clean and in good working order. This will involve having the dressing changed and the catheter flushed once a week by the Nurse administering your treatment.

You will have a dressing on your PICC/ Midline but we advise you to take extra precautions when taking a shower or bath such as covering the site with cling film. Water proof items are also available from your local pharmacy. **You cannot submerge your arm in water.**

Removal

This is a simple procedure that is undertaken by any nurse and is usually painless.

Contact information

Vascular Access Team:

- Mobile: 07796 880038
- Office: 01803 655058

If you need to contact someone urgently out of hours, please call Devon Doctors on 111 or attend the nearest Minor Injuries Unit or A&E department.

[Image: "[PICC vs. Midline Catheter](#)" by [BruceBlaus / Blausen Medical](#), used under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)]

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.

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