

# GETTING A PERIPHERALLY INSERTED CENTRAL CATHETER (PICC)

What to Expect

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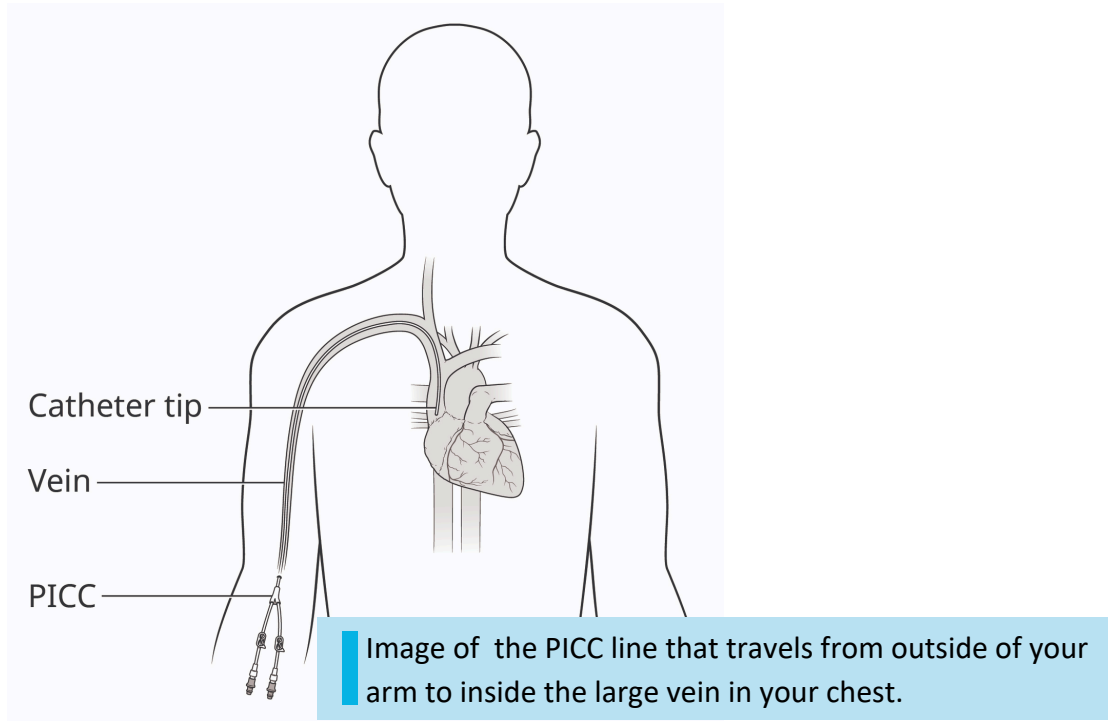
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**Waterloo Wellington  
Regional Cancer Program**

Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario)

# What is a Peripheral Inserted Central Venous Catheter?

A Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC) is a small, flexible tube placed into a vein in your arm. One end of the tube goes inside your body to allow access to a larger vein in your chest. The other end stays on the outside of your body.



## Why Do I Need a PICC?

Your doctor or nurse may suggest a PICC for you if:

- Medicines, fluids, or other products need to be injected into your veins.
- The injections are done many times over 1 to 2 weeks, or longer.
- your IV treatment must be given through a PICC

This kind of treatment is called intravenous (IV) therapy. Having a PICC means you don't have to have a needle put into your arm each time you need IV therapy. Your nurse can access and use your PICC instead.

Your nurse can also use your PICC to collect blood samples and to give you:

- fluids
- medicines, like chemotherapy and antibiotics
- a blood transfusion
- IV nutrient (food) – this is called Parenteral Nutrition

As long as it is working well, your PICC can stay in for the whole time you are on treatment.

# Parts of the PICC

Your PICC has several parts:

- **Exit site:** This is the place where the PICC is put in. The exit site must be covered with a bandage to prevent infection.
- **StatLock™:** To prevent your PICC from slipping out, we use a special tape called StatLock to hold your PICC firmly in place. The StatLock must be changed when your PICC bandage is changed.
- **Lumens:** Your PICC may have 1 or 2 tubes that come out of your skin. These tubes are called lumens. Each lumen is a separate tube. Having more than 1 lumen means your nurse can give you different IV treatments at the same time.
- **Cap (the lumen cap):** A cap closes the end of each lumen opening. The cap is used to:
  - Stop blood from coming out of the lumen if the catheter is not clamped.
  - Stop germs from entering the catheter.
  - Make sure the IV tubing and syringes are safely attached to the lumens.
- **Clamp:** On the end of each lumen, you will find a clamp. The clamp prevents blood from coming out of the catheter. Make sure the clamp is always closed when the lumen is not in use or when the lumen cap is being changed.
  - Some PICCs do not have a clamp. They may have a special valve inside the catheter that works like a clamp. Your nurse will let you know if you have this type of catheter.

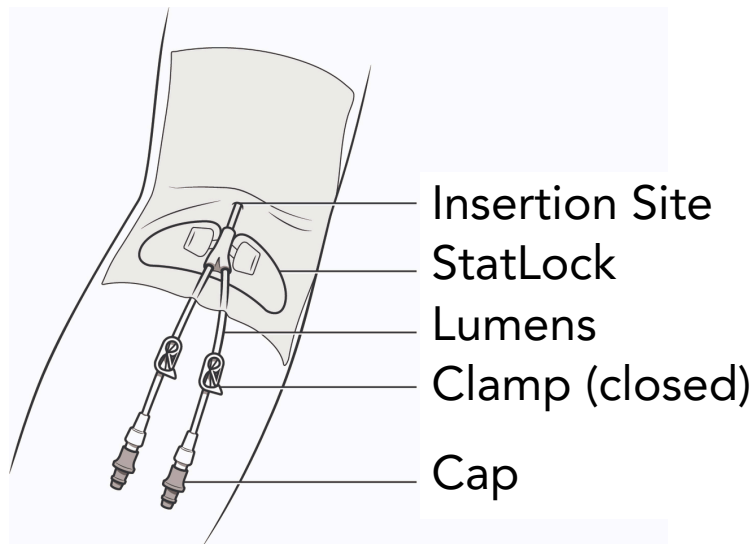


Image showing all of the parts of your PICC line.

# What to Expect When Getting a PICC

## How To Prepare

- Get a blood test done before the PICC is put in.
- Eat and drink as normal
- Before coming to hospital, make sure to:
  - Bring your health card (OHIP)
  - Carry a list of all medicines you take
- If you have allergies to tape, let your healthcare team know.

## What Can I Expect During the Procedure?

- Your PICC will be put in at the Medical Day Unit.
- You will need to change into a hospital gown for the procedure.
- The Vascular Access Team (VAT) will explain the procedure to you and answer any questions you have. You will be asked to sign a consent form before the procedure can start.
- You are taken into the procedure room and moved onto the table. You will lie on your back and stay awake while the PICC is put in. Getting the PICC put in usually takes about 30 to 45 minutes.
- To start, the VAT will inject a medicine into your vein. This freezes the area where the PICC goes in. They will insert the PICC and makes sure it is in place and working properly.
- A StatLock or other type of tape is used to hold the PICC in place near the exit site. The exit site is then covered with a clear bandage to prevent infection.

## What Happens Once I Get Home?

- You may feel sore and swollen around the area where the PICC was put in for 1 or 2 days after the procedure. The area may also be bruised, which can take longer to go away.
- Don't do heavy work or lifting when you get home. For example, don't lift anything heavier than 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms).
- For any pain or discomfort you can take Tylenol. Follow the directions on the bottle. If you are on treatment, check your temperature before taking Tylenol.
- Wear clothes with loose sleeves so you can change your clothes easily without pulling on the PICC.
- Check your bandage for bleeding. **If the bleeding doesn't stop after you press on it for more than 15 minutes, contact your healthcare team, CareChart Digital Health, or go to the nearest emergency department.**

## Care for Your PICC

Your PICC needs to be kept clean to prevent infections and to keep it working well.

A community nurse will help care for your PICC by:

- Changing the bandage at least:
  - once a week (if you have a clear bandage) or
  - every 2 days (if you have gauze and tape)
- **If any part of the bandage gets wet, dirty, or has blood on it, call your community nurse.**
- Flushing the lumens after each use, and **once a week** when the PICC is not in use. Flushing the PICC keeps the catheter lumen clear of blood and medicine.

## Caring for My PICC at Home

- Let your community nurse know right away if your PICC tube is longer than usual, especially if a medication is running through it. **Never push any part of the PICC back into the exit site.** This can cause infection.
- Always keep the PICC bandage clean, dry, and secured (sticking) to the skin. If it gets wet or no longer sticks to the skin let your community nurse know.
- Shower before you are due to get your bandage changed. Wrap a plastic bag over the PICC bandage so it won't get wet.
- Always wash your hands well with soap and water for at least 30 seconds before handling your PICC. Anyone who helps with the PICC care must also wash their hands.
- Do not put any part of your PICC under water. Putting any part of your catheter under water can cause an infection.
- **Never put a cap back on after it has come off the lumen as this can cause infection.** If this happens, make sure the clamp is closed. Call your community nurse.
- **Never use scissors on, or near, the PICC.**
- Keep the PICC away from pets and small children.

## Contact Your Healthcare Team

### When to Call Your Doctor or go to the Emergency Department

- Fever of 38°C (100.4 °F) or higher, with or without chills
- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath with or without dizziness
- Sudden pain in your chest and/or shoulder, especially when you are getting medication through the PICC
- Pain, swelling, redness, or drainage (fluid) around your insertion site
- Swelling or pain of the neck or arm on the side where the PICC is inserted

## For Questions About Your PICC

Your homecare team (Ontario Health atHome) should be able to answer most questions about your PICC. Contact your homecare coordinator directly.

If you have questions about your cancer care, or side effects from your cancer/treatment, you can call your cancer healthcare team.

**WRHN Cancer Centre call centre**  
**8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday to Friday.**  
**519-749-4380**

If you need support outside of these hours you will need to contact CareChart Digital Health:

**1-877-681-3057**  
[www.carechart.ca](http://www.carechart.ca)

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cancerpatiented@wrhn.ca



[cancerwaterloowellington.ca](http://cancerwaterloowellington.ca)

