

# Caring for Your Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

---

## **This booklet will give you information about:**

- What a PICC is and why it is used
- How to live with your PICC
- How to care for your PICC
- How to keep your PICC dry when showering or bathing
- When to contact your health care team
- Who to contact if you have questions or need to report a problem



# What a PICC is and why it is used

---

A Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC) is a long thin tube that goes into your upper arm. It allows access to a large vein in your chest.

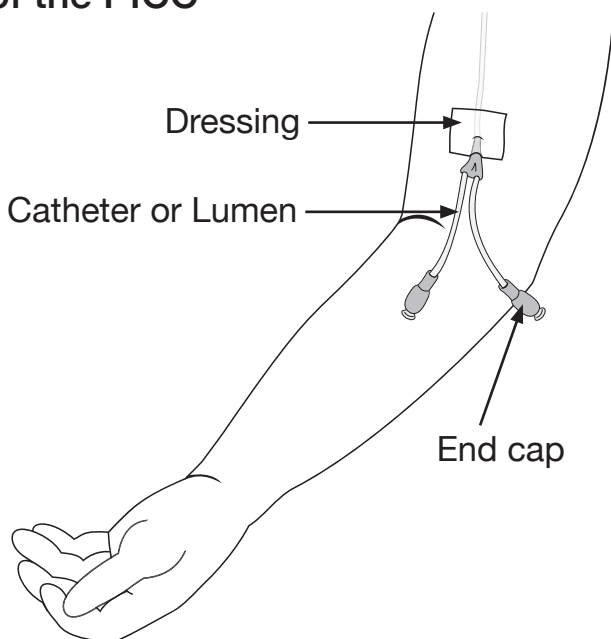
The PICC is used to give you:

- Medicines or drugs
- Blood products
- Fluids

You may have a PICC for a few weeks or months.

Having a PICC may be more comfortable for you because you will not need a needle inserted (put in) into a vein over and over again.

## Parts of the PICC



# How to live with your PICC

---

A PICC will not stop you from most of your daily activities. You will still be able to bend and straighten your arm and pick up objects. For 2 or 3 days after the PICC has been inserted (put in), do not pick up heavy objects as you do not want there to be any blood around the line.

After 3 days, you are able to pick up heavy objects, but be careful that you do not pull out the PICC.

When you have a PICC, DO NOT:

- Carry things in the bend of your arm.
- Swim or put your PICC underwater.
- Get the PICC or dressing wet.

If the dressing lifts up around the edges, put gentle tape to stop any more lifting.

**Important:** Tell your health care team right away if your PICC dressing gets wet. A wet dressing puts you at risk for an infection.

If you have any questions about what you are able (or unable) to do while you have a PICC (for example, playing sports, working, etc.), please talk to your health care team.

# How to care for your PICC

---

- 1 day (24 hours) after your PICC has been inserted (put in), your health care team must check and change the dressing.
  - If you are an Odette Cancer patient, this will happen in the Odette Cancer Centre. If the line was placed on a Friday, then this will probably happen the following Monday.
  - If you are not an Odette Cancer patient, home care will be arranged to check your PICC.

**It is very important to keep your PICC clean and dry.**

Every week your health care team will:

- **Flush the PICC.** Your health care team will flush your PICC with normal saline to prevent blood from clotting and blocking it.
- **Put a new sterile end cap on the PICC.** This is important as the end caps keep the line closed when not used. Your PICC may have 1 or 2 end caps. **Important:** Let your health care team know if the end cap(s) becomes loose, comes off or starts to leak.
- **Change the dressing.** The dressing will need to be changed at least once a week. It also needs to be changed if it is loose, gets dirty or wet. It can only be changed by your health care team.

**(See page 7 for how to contact your health care team.)**

# How to keep your PICC dry when showering or bathing

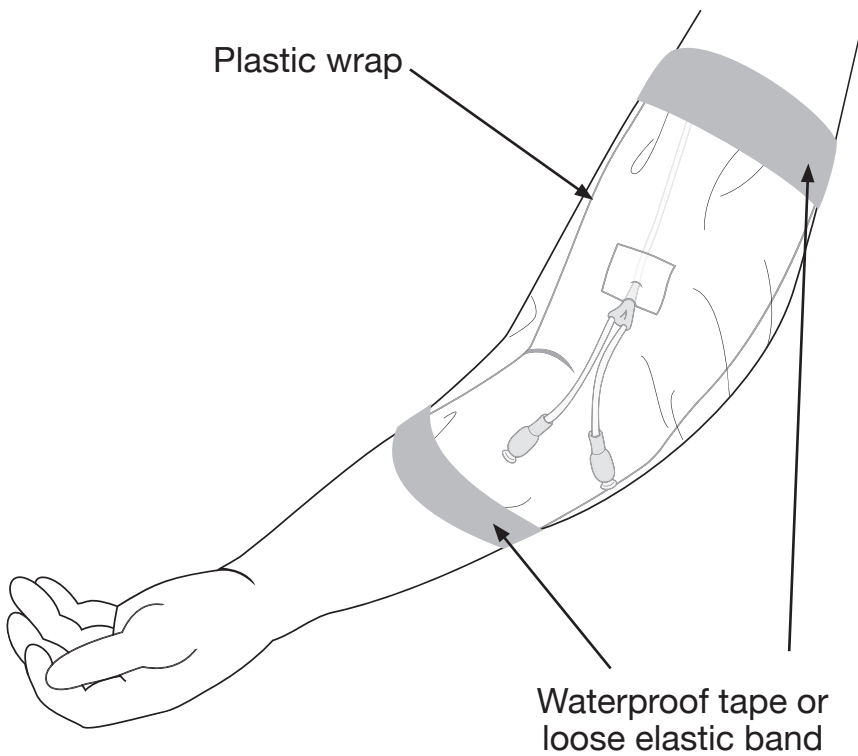
---

Shower, wash, or bathe with the PICC as needed. It is important to cover the whole PICC and dressings when showering or bathing.

Follow these steps to help keep your PICC dry:

1. Cover the whole dressing with clear plastic wrap starting from above your dressing but below your shoulder.
2. Use waterproof tape or elastic bands at both ends to keep the plastic in place and to avoid water getting in. You can buy waterproof tape at your pharmacy.
3. After your shower:
  - Pat the plastic wrap dry with a clean towel
  - Remove the plastic wrap and waterproof tape or elastic bands
  - Look carefully at the dressing to make sure that it is dry and undamaged. If a few drops of water get on the dressing, pat it dry.

**Contact your health care team if the dressing gets very wet (soaked) or damaged.**



# When to contact your health care team

---

Contact your health care team if:

- You have a fever of 38.3°C (100.9°F) or more.
- You have chills or feel very unwell.
- You have pain in your shoulder or arm with the PICC.
- The area around your PICC is red, sore, painful or swollen.
- The PICC site is leaking blood or other liquid.
- The PICC comes out part way or completely. Do not push it back in.
- The PICC or dressing is wet or is dirty.
- The end cap(s) becomes loose, comes off or starts to leak.
- You have any other problems with your PICC.

**(See page 7 for how to contact your health care team.)**



# Who to contact if you have questions or need to report a problem

---

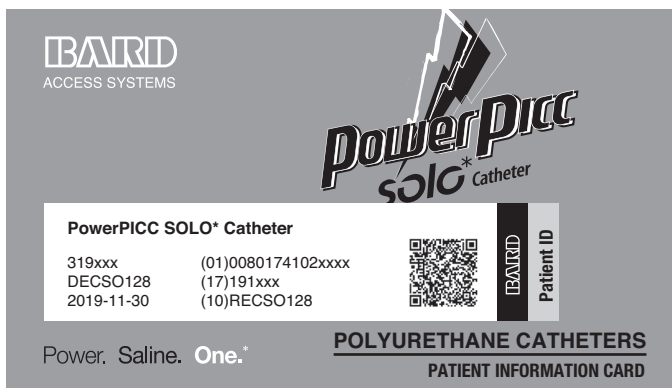
If you have home nursing services from the Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN) Home and Community Care (formally the CCAC), please call them directly.

If you do not have a home nursing service, please call the Odette Cancer Centre at 416.480.5000:

- Between the hours of \_\_\_\_ am to \_\_\_\_ pm, please call extension \_\_\_\_\_ .
- After hours, follow the instructions on the recorded message which will give you information about how to get help.

If you go to an emergency department or urgent care centre bring your PICC information card with you.

Below is a sample of what the PICC information card looks like.



[illegible]



**Odette Cancer Centre**  
2075 Bayview Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario M4N 3M5  
**[sunnybrook.ca/odette](https://sunnybrook.ca/odette)**