

Vascular Access Team

Everything I need to know about a Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC line) or Midline

Introduction

A PICC line is a **Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter** which is a type of central line used for the administration of intravenous medications and for taking blood samples.

Midlines are also peripherally inserted catheters, which are inserted into your upper arm above your elbow and travel up into the large veins of your upper arm.

A PICC line is inserted into your arm and travels along the vein up into your chest and down into one of the large veins close to your heart. The other end will be accessible from your arm at a site above your elbow.

Not all patients are suitable for a PICC line or midline. A specialist practitioner will assess you to see whether a PICC line or midline will be suitable for you and your treatment.

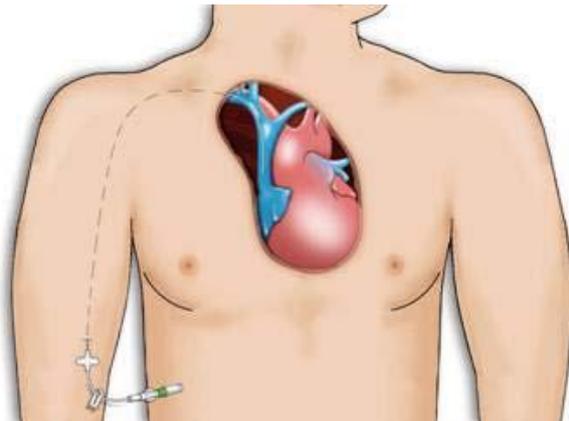


Image courtesy of Vygon Pharmaceuticals

Why have a PICC line or Midline?

A PICC line or midline is useful for patients who have small veins and/or require long term intravenous therapy, for example, over a week. PICC lines and midlines can deliver medications directly to the blood stream and reduce irritation to the veins,



Patient Information

which can sometimes be caused by medications. It is also possible to take blood samples from the line.

A PICC line or midline can be used for:

- Taking blood samples
- Administration of intravenous fluids
- Giving intravenous drugs such as antibiotics, chemotherapy
- Giving blood products
- Intravenous feeding

A PICC line or midline has the following advantages

- They reduce the need for needle punctures for blood tests
- They can be used for long term intravenous access
- They can be used for a wide range of treatments

Are there any risks?

As with other types of central lines, PICC lines and midlines carry risks. These will be discussed with you before the procedure by the Vascular Access Team. Risks include:

- **Infection** - Infection of the line can occur at any time while the line is in place. To prevent infection during insertion the person placing the line will wear a sterile surgical hat, mask and gown. We will also cover you in a large sterile drape, which covers the bed. The line will be used with aseptic infection prevention precautions to reduce the risk of infection.
- **Bleeding at insertion site** - Sometimes a small amount of bleeding can occur at the point where the line enters the skin after insertion. A dressing will be applied after insertion to absorb any bleeding from the site.
- **Bruising** - A small bruise may form at the site of insertion of the line. Some gentle pressure will be applied to the site after insertion to reduce any bleeding or bruising after insertion.
- **Malposition** - The tip of the line may not be placed in the correct position within the vein. You may need to have a chest X-ray after the insertion of your line to check that the tip of line is correctly placed in the large veins close to the heart. Midlines do not require a chest X-ray.
- **Thrombus or clot** - A blood clot may form around the tip of the line. This is often identified by patients experiencing swollen and painful arms. If you experience this symptom you must inform your doctor so they can assess you.

The insertion of a PICC line or midline

If you have been referred for a PICC line or midline, a Vascular Access Specialist practitioner will discuss the procedure with you and assess your ability to have a line inserted. Once the practitioner has made the assessment and you have consented to the procedure you will attend a treatment room within our Day Surgery Department to have the line inserted. The procedure is short and is carried out using local anaesthetic.

There is no preparation required for the procedure and you are able to eat and drink as normal.

Patient Information

- Your arm will be scanned using an ultrasound machine to identify the location and size of your veins. This is painless and not invasive. You will also have a tourniquet placed tightly around the top of your arm to assist in finding the veins.
- You will be asked to lie down flat on your back with the chosen arm placed outwards at a 90 degree angle from your body.
- The Vascular Access Specialist practitioner will clean the skin on your arm with Chlorhexidine and alcohol and insert the line using local anaesthetic to the insertion site of the arm.
- You will be asked to turn your head towards the practitioner to help the line move up the vein. If this is difficult for you please let the Specialist practitioner know.
- You should not feel any pain during the procedure, but may feel some pressure around the site as the Specialist practitioner inserts the line.
- After the line has been inserted, a securing device will be placed on your arm to hold the line in place along with a dressing to reduce any bleeding.
- An ECG machine is used to identify the line is in the correct place. A chest X-ray may also be taken to confirm the position of the line tip before it can be used.

After the procedure

After the procedure you may feel some discomfort from the insertion site. This should settle down, but if you need pain relief you may take your usual painkillers following the manufacturer's instructions.

There may be some bruising or swelling around the insertion site. This is common during the first week after insertion; however if pain persists then please contact the hospital for advice and assessment.

Care of your PICC line or midline

- Keep the exit site clean and dry
- Avoid touching the line site with your hands
- Immediately after the line insertion, a sterile dressing will be applied with a bandage wrapped around the arm. The bandage can be removed the next day.
- Your line should not be immersed in water, therefore you **should not bathe or swim** with your line in
- Showers are permitted. The dressing is waterproof and should therefore be left in place. Pat it dry when you have finished showering.

How is the PICC line or midline removed?

When your line is no longer required it will be removed by the Vascular Access Team or doctor.

You will be asked to lie down. The dressing covering your line will then be removed and the person removing the line will gently pull the line slowly from your arm. You should not feel any pain during the procedure. Once removed, pressure will be applied to your arm for several minutes where the line was inserted to prevent any bleeding or bruising and a gauze dressing will be applied. The gauze dressing can be removed after 24 hours of line removal.

Patient Information

If you have any questions relating to your PICC line or midline please contact the Vascular Access Team for advice

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The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact the Vascular Access Team and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

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