

## Problems with Your Central Venous Catheter (CVC)

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A CVC (central venous catheter) may be used for as long as you need it, or as long as it is working well. Care of your CVC is important and can help prevent problems. Here is information about the signs of possible problems and what you should do.

**Call 911 Emergency if you have any of the following:**

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Feel lightheaded, dizzy or faint
- Feel nervous
- Fast heartbeat

**If you have any of the symptoms listed above, lie down on your left side and raise your head with a pillow or blanket. Have someone call 911.**

**Call your doctor or home care nurse if you have any of the following:**

- **Your CVC Accidentally Comes Out**
  - ▶ If your catheter comes out part way or totally out, do not push the catheter line back in. Cover the area securely with a clean bandage and hold firm pressure on the site, then **call your doctor or home care nurse right away.**
- **Problems Flushing the CVC**
  - ▶ If you have trouble flushing fluids make sure the catheter is not kinked or clamped.
  - ▶ If you still have a problem flushing the catheter it may be blocked. Do not force fluids into the catheter. **Call your doctor or home care nurse right away.**

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**This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

- **Injection cap care**
  - ▶ Injection caps should always be screwed on tight to keep air from getting into the catheter. (If a large amount of air gets into the catheter, it could lead to an emergency that causes shortness of breath or chest pain.) It is important to know how to clamp the CVC and to have an extra clamp at home.
  - ▶ If an injection cap comes off, clamp the tubing right away and call your doctor.
  
- **Signs of Infection**
  - ▶ Redness, swelling, tenderness, warmth or drainage where the catheter enters your skin
  - ▶ Chills or fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher
  - ▶ Dizziness, tiredness or unable to do your normal activities
  - ▶ To help prevent infection it is important to keep your dressing clean and dry at all times.
  - ▶ Check your catheter site for signs of infection each day. **If you have any signs of infection, call your doctor right away.**
  
- **The CVC has a Cut or Tear**
  - ▶ **Do not** use sharp objects like scissors or a razor near your CVC.
  - ▶ Signs that a CVC may be cut or torn include:
    - Blood leaking from the catheter
    - Drops of fluid leaking out of the catheter, especially during flushing
    - Fluid leaking out of the skin around the catheter
    - Pain when fluid is injected into the catheter
  - ▶ If fluid or blood is leaking from the end of the catheter, look to see if the end of the CVC is not capped or a cap is not screwed on tight. If a cap is loose, tighten it.
  - ▶ If you find a tear in your catheter, immediately clamp it between the tear and where the catheter exits your body.
  - ▶ If you do not have a clamp, fold the catheter between the tear and where the catheter exits your body and tape it together.
  - ▶ Cover it with gauze and call your doctor or home care nurse.