

## Problems with Your PICC

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A PICC can be used for as long as you need it, or as long as it is working well. Catheter care is very 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 these symptoms, 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:

- **Problems Flushing the PICC**
  - ▶ Trouble flushing the catheter
  - ▶ Make sure the catheter is not kinked or clamped.
  - ▶ The catheter may be blocked. **Do not force the flushing solution into the catheter. If you still have the problem, call your doctor or home care nurse right away.**
- **Signs of Infection**
  - ▶ Redness, swelling, tenderness, warmth or drainage where the catheter enters your skin
  - ▶ Fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher

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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.**

- ▶ Dizziness, tiredness or unable to do your normal activities
  - ▶ Check your catheter site for signs of infection each day. To help prevent infection it is important to keep your dressing clean and dry at all times.
  - ▶ Swelling or discomfort in the upper arm, shoulder and/or chest on same side as the PICC
  - ▶ 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 can lead to an emergency that causes shortness of breath or chest pain.)
- **The PICC Has a Cut or Tear**
    - ▶ Be careful not to cut or tear the catheter. **Keep scissors away from your PICC catheter to prevent cutting it by mistake.**
    - ▶ Signs that a PICC 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
    - ▶ Look to see if the end of the PICC catheter is not capped or if there is a hole in the catheter where air can enter. If a cap is loose, tighten it.
    - ▶ **If you see a hole or tear in your catheter, fold the catheter above the hole or tear and tape it together. Cover the catheter with gauze. Go to the nearest Emergency Department.**
- **The PICC Comes Out**
    - ▶ If your PICC comes out part way or totally out of your arm, **do not push the line back in.** Cover the area with a gauze and apply firm pressure, then call your doctor or home care nurse.