



Saint Elizabeth  
*Well beyond health care*



## What Is a PICC Line and Why Do You Need It?

At Saint Elizabeth we believe in person-centred care and recognize family as essential to a child's care team. We want to empower you with knowledge and skills to be as independent as possible in meeting the health care needs of your child. This information is designed for you if you have a child who requires the use of a PICC line.

PICC stands for **Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter**. The catheter is long, soft, thin flexible tube and may stay in your child's arm for several weeks or months. A PICC may be used to give fluids, medications, nutrition, and/or take blood samples for testing.

### Why does my child need a PICC line?

A PICC line may be recommended for your child for a variety of treatment options, including:

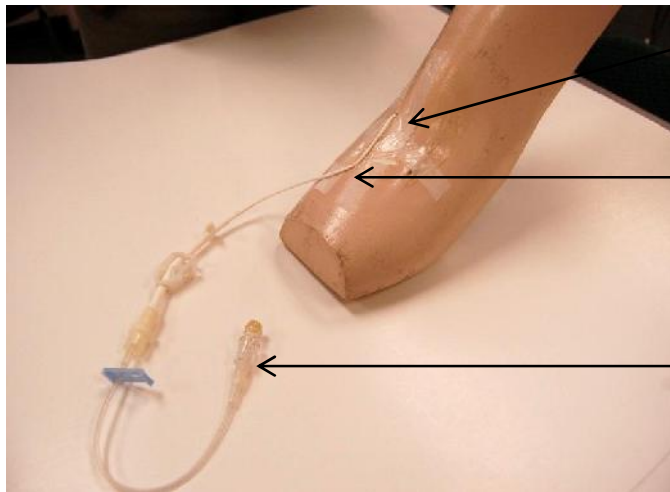
- **To continue therapy at home**  
Some children may need to continue receiving IV medications at home after leaving the hospital. Your home health nurse can help teach you to safely care for a PICC line at home.
- **To reduce discomfort from frequent intravenous catheter changes**  
With some medical conditions, like a severe infection, children may need intravenous (IV) therapy for longer than one week. IV therapy means medicine that is put into the vein. Frequent needle insertions can be painful, but a PICC line can stay in for weeks or months.
- **To receive strong medications/intravenous fluids without damaging his/her blood vessels**  
Strong medications and/or concentrated IV nutrition fluids (TPN) can be irritating to our veins. Frequent needle insertions can damage children's veins, so a PICC may be the best way for some children to receive medicines and IV fluids.
- **To avoid needle sticks for blood tests**  
Your child may need frequent blood sampling for lab tests. These samples can be collected from some types and sizes of PICC lines, instead of needing additional needle sticks.

### Important Things to Remember

- **Do not pick or pull at the dressing, the catheter or the IV tubing.** The PICC is not attached inside the child's body. It can come out if it's pulled. Tape the PICC in a looped position and cover with a bandage. Remember to tape the gauze wrapped around the end of the PICC to your child's arm, or onto the chest if your child is small.
- **Do not let children touch or play with the PICC**
- **Do not swing** or allow your child to swing the PICC line arm vigorously.
- **Keep the site covered** as much as possible to prevent the child from playing with the tube.
- **Never leave the child alone when undressed.**
- **Keep all sharp objects out of reach,** especially scissors.
- **When bathing** the child keep the skin where the tube enters the arm dry. Plastic wrap can be taped over a gauze dressing or a transparent dressing can protect the site.
- **Teach** anyone who cares for your child about the catheter.
- **Inform your child's school** about the catheter so an adult can help your child if needed.

## What does a normal PICC line look like?

- Dressing is clean, dry and secured
- IV tubing closest to the PICC site is secured and it is not pulling on the dressing. The tubing should not be dragging on the floor.
- No pain or swelling in the arm, shoulder, chest or neck



**Insertion Site**

**Catheter**

**Injection Cap**  
(A device that caps the end of the catheter.)

### Warning Signs

**Alert your home health provider if you or your child notices any of the following:**

- Dressing is loose, wet, foul smelling
- Catheter is torn or broken (Clamp the catheter as close to the arm as possible, between the break/tear and the arm)
- Any pain, swelling of the arm, shoulder, chest or neck; Pain when the PICC is being used.
- Your child's PICC is hard to flush or will not flush at all.
- The IV tubing becomes disconnected or has kinks that could pinch off the catheter.
- Blood backs up in to the tubing
- If the alarm on the pump sounds it can indicate a blockage.
- Your child has fever or chills.

### Questions?

- Speak with your health care provider
- Call our "Ask Elizabeth" support line at: 1-877-787-SEHC (7352) weekdays from 8:30 a.m. -4:30 p.m. EST
- In case of emergency, call 911

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