How to care for your Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC)

Information for patients
It is really important that your line (catheter) is well looked after at all times to prevent infections or the line becoming blocked. You can easily help prevent complications by following the correct procedure to care for your line.

Important signs to look out for include:

- raised temperature
- any pain, redness or swelling in your arm, side of your neck or chest wall where your line has been placed.

These signs must be reported immediately to the Triage team or the department where you are receiving your treatment.

Triage:  01865 572 192
Haematology:  01865 235 048
Oncology:  01865 235 012

If you cannot get through on the number above please contact the switchboard on: 01865 741 841 and ask for the triage team.

If you notice the length of tubing on the outside of your arm is getting longer, contact the unit which gave you your treatment.

The dressing covering your line needs to be changed 24 hours after the line has been put in, then at least every 7 days. It will need to be changed more often if it becomes loose, wet or blood stained.

To prepare for changing your dressing:

1. Make sure you have washed and dried your hands.
2. Ensure you have a clean area to work from.
3. Gather together everything you need: Chloraprep, steristrips, semi permeable dressing.
How to change your dressing:

1. Carefully remove the old dressing, ensuring the line doesn’t get pulled out.
2. WASH AND DRY YOUR HANDS AGAIN.
3. Open the packet of Chloraprep and dressing onto a clean surface to allow easy access.
4. To clean with the Chloraprep: Squeeze the wings at side of the applicator once with sponge pointing down. Once the fluid reaches the sponge, start cleaning the insertion site and area surrounding it. Rub the area round and round and up and down for 30 seconds. Always make sure you carefully rub away any dried blood from round the insertion site. Be careful not to dislodge your line.
5. Allow the area to air dry.
6. Apply your dressing over the line as shown by your nurse.

Proper care of your line whilst showering or bathing:

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT YOU KEEP THE DRESSING DRY AT ALL TIMES.

1. Use the bathguard given to you by your nurse. If you find it difficult to use, cover your dressing with clingfilm.
2. DO NOT submerge your PICC in water.
3. If, when you remove the bathguard/clingfilm the dressing has become wet, it must be changed immediately, following the procedure shown above.
If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221473 or email PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk