

# FLUSHING YOUR PERIPHERALLY INSERTED CENTRAL CATHETER

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Whether you are receiving care in the hospital as an outpatient, from a home care company, or are caring for yourself or a loved one, to ensure your long-term care is comfortable and complication-free, your peripherally inserted central catheter must be kept in good working order.

*"Now, Mr. Shafer, what we're going to do first is we're just going to flush your line..."*

Flushing your PICC line is a way of cleaning it on the inside to prevent infection and clotting. This is very important and is a regular part of daily care.

Normally, you will flush your PICC line before and after getting medications or fluids; after getting your blood drawn; or once in the morning and night, when the PICC line is not in use. If you or a loved one is flushing your PICC line, always follow the specific instructions provided by your healthcare provider. Here are some general things to keep in mind.

When caring for your PICC line, always use an area that is clean and germ-free to prevent infection. Anybody coming in contact with your PICC line must wash their hands thoroughly, using soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Any time your PICC line is flushed or medication is put into it, the injection cap must be cleaned with an alcohol wipe. Always let it air dry. Do not fan or blow on it.

Usually, normal saline will be used to flush your PICC line. But your healthcare provider may also prescribe a flush with heparin. Heparin is a medication that prevents your blood from clotting, and can help keep the tube open.

To flush your line, attach a syringe of normal saline solution to the injection cap and push the solution through the tube. To give the saline a chance to clean the inside of the line thoroughly and prevent infection, you can push a little solution into the tube, pause for one to two seconds, then push a little more in. Pause and repeat until all of the saline in the syringe is used.

Once your PICC line is flushed, if you need medication at this time, wipe the injection cap with alcohol and let it dry. Then connect the medication to the injection cap. After all of your medication is given, the PICC line must be flushed again with normal saline to keep the line clean.

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If you also use heparin, always flush your PICC line with normal saline before heparin. Repeat these steps for each lumen in your PICC line, making sure you use different syringes for each port to prevent infection.

If you will be taking care of your PICC line at home, practice these steps with your healthcare provider to get used to the routine. Remember, flush your PICC line with normal saline solution. Give your medication or fluid. Flush with normal saline solution. Flush with heparin, if prescribed.