

CHANGING YOUR PICC LINE DRESSINGS

TRANSCRIPT

To prevent infection, the dressings of your peripherally inserted central catheter should be changed on a regular basis – usually every 7 days. If your dressings get wet or soiled, have them changed right away to keep your insertion site healthy.

The area you change your dressing in should be germ-free, and anybody coming into contact with the site should wear a mask and wash their hands thoroughly. A sterile drape included in the dressing change kit will cover the area, helping to prevent infection.

Your old dressing can be removed carefully, starting at the bottom. Do not touch the insertion site or catheter.

Check the site for signs of infection.

“Make sure there’s no drainage. It looks good. There’s no redness. Nothing that tells me it’s infected, so it looks real good.”

Look for increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness at the area; red streaks leading from your insertion site; or blood draining from the site. If you notice any of these signs, or if you develop a fever, you may have an infection that needs to be treated immediately.

Wearing sterile gloves and a mask, disinfect the skin around the insertion site thoroughly. Use a back-and-forth scrubbing motion for at least 30 seconds. Allow the area to dry. Do not fan or blow on the area to speed things up. Prevent infection any way you can.

When the site is dry, put the new dressing on over the insertion site. Putting a dressing on when the site is still wet can cause blisters and irritate your skin. If you are doing this at home, throw all of your used supplies – including your old dressings – in a plastic trash bag clearly labeled that it contains medical waste. And wash your hands thoroughly.

Remember, your dressings need to be changed every 7 days, or as directed by your healthcare provider. Develop a routine to help you remember when they need to be changed. You may want to mark it on your calendar, set an alarm on your phone, or label the dressing with the date and time of the last change so you don’t forget.

“There is the date, today’s date, and that’s a reminder so that we change it once a week.”