

# Care in the Hospital: Central Vascular Access Device (CVAD)

While you're in the hospital, your body may need extra help to do some of the things it usually does on its own.

Sometimes this care includes having a central vascular access device, or CVAD.

A CVAD is a thin, flexible tube that's inserted into a vein in your arm, chest, neck, or leg.

The tube is passed through the vein until it reaches a larger "central" vein near the heart.

The tube can be used to deliver fluids, medicine, and nutrition into your bloodstream.

A CVAD can also be used for other reasons.

For example, it can be used to monitor your blood pressure, take blood samples, and to provide some kinds of medical treatments.

There are different kinds of central vascular access devices.

You may hear your care team use terms like central line or PICC, depending on the type of CVAD you have.

In this video, you'll hear it mostly referred to as a CVAD or line.

Keep in mind, a CVAD will only be inserted if it's necessary for your care.

And it will be removed as soon as it's no longer needed.

When you have a CVAD, it's important to prevent infections.

That's why you'll see your care team taking special steps when caring for it.

Your care team will wash their hands before they touch the line or the area around it.

Using a special cleanser such as chlorhexidine gluconate, or CHG, the care team will carefully clean and disinfect the part of the line that's outside your body.

And they will clean and disinfect the skin where the line enters your body.

They also will change the bandages that cover the area.

You may hear your care team call this CHG bathing.

If you take a shower, your nurse will cover the CVAD area with a waterproof bandage.

The nurse also will cover the end of the line.

And there are things that you can do to prevent infection and keep your CVAD working well while you are in the hospital.

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The most important thing is to always wash your hands before you touch the line or the area around it.

Use soap and water, and dry your hands with a clean paper towel or cloth.

And make sure that anyone else who touches your CVAD has washed their hands first.

Keep the area around the line clean and dry.

Make sure to let your nurse know if the bandages become wet or dirty.

And be gentle with the area where the line is inserted.

Try not to move in a way that could pull on the line.

And check that your clothing doesn't rub or pull on it.

Be sure to use the call button or let your nurse know right away if you have any problems that might be related to your CVAD.

These include things like chest pain; shortness of breath; trouble breathing; feeling like your heart is beating fast or irregularly; or feeling dizzy or lightheaded.

Tell your nurse if you have pain, swelling, or warmth or redness near the line; red streaks leading from the area around the line; pus draining from the area around the line; or if you feel like you have a fever or chills.

And tell your nurse if you have liquid leaking from around the CVAD or if you notice cracks or leaks in the line.

A central vascular access device can help you get the medical treatments you need while you're in the hospital.

Remember, you can always ask if you have any questions.

Your care team is there to support you.