What Is a PICC?
A PICC is a thin, flexible tube about 20 inches long that is inserted into a vein in your arm. Your health care providers may call it a PICC ("pick") line.

Why Do I Need a PICC?
A PICC is used to give treatments such as antibiotics, high-calorie liquids, chemotherapy, and blood transfusions. It is also used as a way to get samples of your blood.

How Is a PICC Put In Place?
Your PICC will be put in by a specially trained team. A needle is inserted into a vein in your arm above the bend of the elbow. The PICC is threaded through the vein, and the needle is removed. The end of the PICC sits in a large vein just above the heart. It is held in place by a clear dressing and an anchor device. You will also have an x-ray to make sure the end of the PICC is in the correct position. A PICC can be in place for weeks.

How Can I Prevent An Infection In My PICC?
- Make sure your hands are clean before touching your PICC. You can use soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand gel.
- Be sure anyone who touches the PICC cleans his or her hands.
- BEFORE using the injection cap, vigorously scrub it for 15 seconds with an alcohol wipe.
- Follow the proper guidelines to care for your PICC.

Caring for Your PICC

Bathing
You may shower with your PICC in place. Wrap the insertion site (where the PICC goes into your arm) with plastic wrap and tape to keep it from getting wet. NEVER allow this area to be submerged in water.

Flushing the PICC
Your PICC needs to be flushed daily with a heparin solution. Nurses will show you how to do this. Tell your health care providers if you have an allergy to heparin.

When to Flush the PICC
- If you use your PICC to give medications, flush it with 10 mL of normal saline BEFORE each dose.
- AFTER your dose of medication, flush the catheter with 10-20 mL of normal saline followed by 3 mL of heparin.
How to Flush the PICC
Always use a 10-mL syringe to flush your PICC. Home health care will provide you with pre-filled syringes.

Follow these steps to flush the PICC:
1. Clean the injection cap with an alcohol wipe.
2. Remove the cap from the syringe, twist the syringe tip into the injection cap at the end of the PICC.
3. Unclamp the PICC and push all of the saline or heparin into the PICC using the “push and pause” method—your nurse will show you how to do it. NEVER USE FORCE to flush it.
4. Reclamp the PICC after flushing. The PICC clamps should always be closed when the line is not in use to prevent air getting in or blood leaking out.

If the PICC has more than one lumen (tube), repeat the flushing steps for each one. Use a new syringe for each lumen.

If Your PICC Will Not Flush
- Check to make sure the PICC clamp is open.
- If the clamp is open, your PICC may be plugged with a blood clot. Call your health care provider. A medication can be placed in it to dissolve the blockage.

Watch For These Symptoms
- Pain, redness, or slight swelling in the arm with your PICC: Some patients experience this within the first 10 days after the PICC is put in place. Apply a warm pad to the arm as soon as symptoms appear. For the next three days, apply heat four to five times daily for about 30 minutes. Your arm should feel better within one to two days. If the symptoms get worse, call your doctor.
- Fever above 100.5°F or chills: Call your doctor right away. These are signs of an infection. It may or may not be caused by your PICC.

How Is the PICC Removed?
When you no longer need the PICC, a nurse will remove it. This is a painless procedure that takes only a few minutes.

If You Have Questions
For any question or problem with your PICC, call your provider or clinic at this number:

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After hours or weekends, call 801-585-0100 and ask for the oncologist on call.