



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

What is an arterial line?

An arterial (r-teer-ee-ul) line is a small tube that is inserted into one of your blood vessels. It is placed in an artery in your wrist below the thumb or in your groin area. A doctor or an assistant inserts the line right at the bedside.



Will it be painful?

Numbing medicine will be injected into your skin just before placing the arterial line. You may feel pressure with placement of the needle that is used to insert the line. The needle is removed and a plastic tube, or catheter, is all that is left in the artery. The procedure takes about 10 minutes.

Why do you need an arterial line?

To monitor your blood pressure, if it needs to be watched closely
Help keep a specific blood pressure range if you need strong medicines
Prevent a blood pressure cuff from squeezing your arm every 5 to 15 minutes
Get blood samples without having to re-stick you with needles
Sometimes, this may be placed before you go to surgery, for all the same reasons listed above.

How long will I have to have the arterial line in for?

Everyone is different. You will keep this line only as long as your doctor feels it is needed.

What can I do to keep this line safe?

If you see that the cover over the line is wet or has fresh blood on it, let your nurse know to make sure it is not leaking.

Be very careful when moving the limb with the arterial line to prevent accidentally pulling it out.

Once the line is in place, you should not feel any pain. Please let your nurse know if you do. (You may have a funny feeling when the line is flushed but it should not be painful.)

Speak Up If You Have Any Questions or Concerns