



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

Working Together to Prevent Central Line Infections

A central line catheter is a small tube that is placed into a large vein in your arm, neck, chest, or groin. This type of device is used when medicine, nutrition, treatment, or fluids need to be given over weeks or months. Having this type of catheter removes the need to have IV's inserted repeatedly. But, central catheters may be a cause of blood stream infection. We will do everything possible to prevent infection, but we need your help.

What are the risk factors for infection?

Anyone can get an infection but the risk is more if you:

- Are in the intensive care unit.
- Have a weakened immune system or serious illness.
- Are receiving bone marrow or chemotherapy.
- Have the line in place for a long time
- If the central catheter is in your neck or groin.

What are the symptoms of a central line catheter infection?

- Redness, pain, or swelling at or near the catheter site.
- Pain or tenderness along the path of the catheter.
- Drainage from the skin around the catheter.
- Sudden fever and chills.

How is a central catheter infection treated?

- Treatment depends on the type of catheter you have. Your doctor will prescribe antibiotics and may decide to remove the central catheter.

What are hospitals doing to prevent infection?

- Hospital staff will wash their hands before touching the catheter.
- When the catheter is inserted the healthcare worker inserting it will wear sterile clothing and cover you with a sterile sheet. Your skin will also be cleansed with an antiseptic solution
- The catheter site is checked every day for signs of infection.
- The catheter will be removed as soon as it is no longer needed.

What can patients and families do to prevent infection?

- Ask questions. Ask your doctors and nurses to explain why you need the catheter.
- Make sure your doctors and nurses wash their hands before touching your catheter.
- Try not to touch the catheter.
- If your bandage comes off, gets wet or dirty, tell your nurse or doctor right away.
- Do not let family or other visitors touch the catheter.
- Have family and other visitors wash their hands before entering your room.

All members of the hospital team help to prevent infections. You can help prevent infections because you are a member of the team.

Speak Up if You Have Questions