Changing Your Central Line Catheter Cap

The catheter cap on each lumen of your central line needs to be changed once a week. A lumen is a small tube within your catheter.

These same steps can be used for either a PICC or a Hickman Central Line. You may or may not choose to wear gloves, but handwashing is a must!

To change your catheter caps, follow the steps on the next pages.
**Step 1**
Clean your work table with a disinfectant wipe.

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**Step 2**
Gather your supplies (enough for each lumen):
- Catheter caps
- Alcohol wipes
- Prefilled heparin or saline flush
- Gloves – optional
- Alcohol cover (Curos®) – optional

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**Step 3**
- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Dry your hands with a clean paper towel.
- You may also use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

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**Step 4**
If you have been taught to or want to use gloves, put them on.

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**Step 5**
Take the flush syringe from the package.
**Step 6**

- Peel open the new catheter cap package.
- Keep the cap in the opened package.
- Put it down on the work table.

**Step 7**

- Take off the syringe cap.
- Do not let the tip of the syringe touch anything that is not sterile. **If it does, throw it away and use a new syringe.**

**Step 8**

- Hold on the cap.
- Screw the flush syringe to the new catheter cap.
**Step 9**

- Hold the syringe with the cap attached straight up in the air. Make sure the plunger is pointing to the floor.
- Tap the syringe so that any air bubbles rise to the top.
- Push the plunger to the 5mL mark. This will take out any air and extra flush from the syringe and the cap. Some flush may drip out. This is okay.

**Step 10**

- Lay the syringe with the attached cap on the table.

**Step 11**

- Be sure that the clamp is over the wording, "clamp here."
- Close the clamp on the catheter. You should hear a click.
- Open a new alcohol wipe. Set it aside for Step 13.
Step 12
- Hold the lumen, then unscrew the old catheter cap and green alcohol cover (if there is one on).
- Throw them away.
- Be careful not to touch the end of the catheter. Do not let the catheter touch your skin or the table.
- **If you are unable to unscrew the catheter cap, STOP and call you doctor or nurse.**

Step 13
- Scrub the end of the catheter with an alcohol wipe for at least 10 seconds.
- Let it dry completely.
- **Do not let the end of the catheter touch anything.**

Step 14
- Pick up the new catheter cap with the syringe attached.
- Pull off the plastic piece from the end of the new catheter cap.
Step 15

• Screw the new catheter cap and the flush syringe onto the catheter.

Step 16

• Open the clamp on the catheter.

Step 17

• With steady pressure, start to push the flush plunger.

• Clamp the catheter while pushing in the last 0.5 mL of flush into the catheter. This may keep blood from backing into your catheter.

• If it is hard to push the flush, go to Step 24.

• Do not use force to flush.
Step 18
• Be sure that the clamp is over the wording “clamp here.”

• Close the clamp on the catheter. You should hear a click.

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Step 19
• Hold the catheter cap tightly and unscrew the syringe from the catheter.

• Be careful not to loosen the catheter cap from the catheter.

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Step 20
**Important! Always check to be sure the catheter cap is on tight.**
**Step 21**

- If available, put a **new** green alcohol cover (Curos®) onto the catheter cover.

**Step 22**

- Do Steps 1 to 21 again to change the cap on each lumen of your catheter.

**Step 23**

- After you change all your caps, throw your supplies away.

**Step 24**

- **If it is hard to push the flush,** check to make sure the clamp is open. If it was clamped, open the clamp and try Step 17 again.

- **If it is still hard to push, STOP. Do not push the flush.** Close the clamp. Unscrew and remove the syringe. **Call your Doctor or Home Care Nurse.**
The above information contains some, but not necessarily all, of the information that you may need to care for your central line. Please speak with your doctor or nurse if you have questions or issues you may experience.

This document should not take the place of conversations with members of your health care team about your treatment and effects you may experience during and after the use of a central line.

If you experience any significant change in your health during or after treatment, contact a member of your health care team right away.

_Developed by the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Brigham and Women’s Hospital Central Line Education Team, August 2013._