



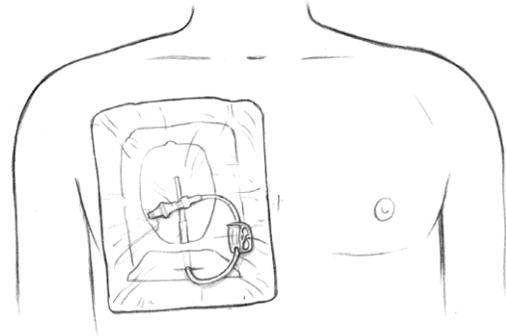
Living with Your Central Line Catheter

Take care of your catheter every day to prevent problems. Before you know it, you will get used to living with your catheter. Soon, you will find that it does not get in the way of most of your usual activities.



Preventing Problems

- **Do NOT get your catheter or bandage wet.**
 - * Coil it and cover it with plastic and tape when you take a shower. You may also use a dressing cover, like AquaGuard® or Press 'n Seal®.
 - * If the bandage gets wet, **it needs to be changed right away.** Either change it the way you were taught or call homecare to change it.
 - * You may take baths or showers, but you **must completely cover your dressing and connections.**
- **Do not let your catheter go under water** in a tub or pool.
- Call your doctor if you have signs of infection. These are:
 - * Redness, pus, or drainage where the catheter goes into your skin
 - * Swelling around the catheter
 - * A red streak on your skin over the area near the catheter
 - * A fever of 100.5° F or higher
- Keep your catheter secure by taping it up. Do **NOT** let it dangle.
- Sometimes the dressing can cause irritation. If you see redness in the area covered by your dressing, call your doctor or nurse. They can change the kind of dressing you use.
- **Do not use sharp objects, like scissors, knives, or safety pins around your catheter.** These can damage your catheter.
- Please remember to keep a spare clamp with you at all times.



If your catheter cracks, splits, leaks, or is accidentally cut, immediately clamp it close to your chest.

Call your doctor or nurse immediately!

Keeping Things Sterile

It is important to take care of your catheter to keep it clean and working. When you do this, you must keep your supplies sterile, which means germ free. This is important because germs can lead to infection.

To keep things sterile, follow these important instructions:

- Choose your work area carefully. It should be clean and comfortable. Some patients find using a kitchen table with a stand-up mirror helpful.
- Clean your work area well with a disinfectant wipe.
- Before you touch your catheter, always wash and dry your hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub, like Purell.
- **Use only sterile supplies.** Once sterile supplies are open, if anything that is not sterile touches them, they will have germs on them. **Throw these supplies away.**



Remember! Keep Your Supplies Sterile!

This includes when you:

- Change your dressing
- Flush your catheter
- Change the cap on the end of the catheter

Important!

Call Your Doctor or Nurse for These Problems

Watch for the following problems. **If you have any of them, call your doctor or nurse immediately.**

- A fever of 100.5° F or higher.
- Shaking chills after you flush your catheter.
- Redness, tenderness, bleeding, or drainage at your catheter site or along the tunnel.
- A skin rash under your dressing.
- Pain, swelling, or numbness in your arm or neck on the same side as your catheter.
- If your catheter cuff can be seen at the exit site.
- Trouble flushing your catheter. If this happens, do not force the flush. Forcing can cause your catheter to break.
- Breaks, leaks, or tears in your catheter. If this happens: clamp the catheter between the damaged area and your body. Cover the catheter with a sterile 4 x 4 gauze pad and call your doctor or nurse immediately.
- If your dressing or catheter gets wet in the shower or tub.

My Doctor is _____ Phone Number _____

My Nurse is _____ Phone Number _____

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 Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Brigham and Women's Hospital Central Line Education Team, August 2013.