Have a smartphone? Open your camera app and focus on the QR code to watch a video about flushing your central line catheter or go to www.dana-farber.org/centralline.

Caring for your Hickman catheter includes learning to shower with it, washing your hands so you can change the bandages, and changing the bandages—also called dressing.

How do I shower with my Hickman catheter?

- You can shower the same day as your procedure, but you must completely cover your dressing and catheter and keep the dressing dry.
- Coil your catheter gently and cover it completely with plastic wrap and tape or a product like Press and Seal.
- Avoid facing the shower directly. Try to shower with your back facing the shower head.
- Your catheter cannot go underwater in a pool, tub, lake, etc., even if it’s covered in plastic wrap.
- If the dressing gets wet, it needs to be changed right away.

How do I wash my hands in preparation to change the dressing?

1. Use warm water to get your hands wet
2. Apply soap
3. Rub your hands together vigorously. Be sure the scrub your nails, the back of your hands, thumbs, and the areas between your fingers
4. Continue rubbing hands together for at least 10 seconds while rinsing
5. Dry your hands with a clean paper tower or hand dryer. If it’s possible, use a paper towel to turn off the water so that you avoid any germs on the faucet

How often should I change the dressing?
- Change the clear dressing every 7 days
- If you have gauze underneath the clear dressing, change it every 2 days
- If your dressing gets wet or loose, change it immediately

How do I change the dressing?
1. Find a spot, like a tabletop or counter, for all your supplies
2. Clean the area with a disinfectant wipe
3. Gather all supplies:
   - Dressing kit
   - 2 pairs of plastic gloves
   - Mirror
   - Mask
   - Open trash can (this goes on the floor, not your surface)
4. Wash your hands with soap and water.
5. Open the dressing kit on your surface. It is sterile inside, so don’t touch it with your bare hands
6. Put on your plastic gloves and mask

7. Loosen the edges of the old dressing, carefully take it off, and throw it in the trash. If you have a Biopatch or gauze, also take them off and throw them away. **Be careful not to pull on your catheter when removing the old dressing, gauze, or Biopatch.**

8. Take off your plastic gloves and throw them away. Wash your hands.

9. Use the mirror to check the area around the catheter for signs of infection, like:
   - Redness, swelling, or warmth
   - Pus or drainage
   - A red streak on the skin

   **If you see any signs of infection, call your doctor as soon as you finish changing the dressing**

10. Put on a new pair of gloves
11. Open the ChloraPrep package in your kit, and squeeze the plastic wings on the side

12. Clean the skin **around** your catheter with the ChloraPrep swab. Scrub back and forth for 30 seconds. Then gently scrub **over and under** your catheter.

13. Leave the area alone after cleaning while it dries. Let it air-dry completely. This will take about 1-2 minutes

14. If you have any drainage around your catheter, put new gauze over the area where the catheter comes out of your skin.

15. While wearing your gloves, open the clear dressing. Touch only the outer edge. If you touch the inner part, throw it away and get a new dressing. Peel the backing off the clear dressing.
16. Put the clear dressing over your catheter.

17. Peel the paper frame off the clear dressing. Gently press around the edges of your dressing to make sure the edges stick to the skin.

18. The paper frame you peeled off contains tape to secure the dressing. Peel the notched edge off the paper edge.
19. Place the notched tape under the catheter tubing and over the clear dressing. Place another piece of tape over the catheter tubing and over the clear dressing.

20. Loop the IV tubing and secure with tape. **Tape to your skin, not the clear dressing.** Write the date on the tape so you know when to change it next.

21. Take off your gloves and mask and throw them away

**What other precautions should I take with my Hickman catheter?**

- Keep an extra clamp on hand in case your catheter cracks, splits, leaks, or is accidentally cut. If any of these things happen, clamp your catheter and then call your care team immediately.
- Do not use sharp objects like scissors, knives, or safety pins around your catheter. They could damage your catheter.
What signs and symptoms should I watch out for?

If you notice any of the following signs, call your cancer care team immediately

- A fever of 100.5° F or higher
- Shaking and chills after you flush your catheter
- Redness, tenderness, bleeding, or drainage where your catheter is
- A skin rash under your bandages
- Pail, 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, don’t force it – this can cause your catheter to break
- Breaks, tears, or leaks in your catheter
  - If this happens, clamp the catheter between the damaged area and your body. Cover the catheter with a sterile piece of gauze and call your cancer care team immediately.
Each lumen of your Central Line Catheter needs to be flushed once a day with a 0.9% Saline Flush. 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 flush your catheter, follow the steps on the next pages.

Step 1
- Clean your work table with a disinfectant wipe

Step 2
Gather your supplies (enough for each lumen):
- Catheter caps
- Alcohol wipes
- Prefilled 10mL 0.9% saline flush
- Gloves – optional
- Alcohol cover (Curos®)
Step 3
• Wash your hands well with soap and water.
• Dry your hands with a clean paper towel.
• You may also use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

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

Step 5
• Take the flush syringe from the package

Step 6
• Hold the syringe straight up in the air with the plunger pointing to the floor.
• Tap the syringe so that any air bubbles rise to the top.
FLUSHING A CENTRAL LINE

Step 7

- Take off the syringe cap

Step 8

- Push the plunger to the 10mL mark. This will take out any air and extra flush from the syringe. Some flush may drip out. This is okay.

- Hold the syringe upright. **Do not let the syringe touch anything!**
Step 9 - A  
If You Have a Green Alcohol Cover Over Your Catheter Cap  
• Remove the green alcohol cover only (do not reuse).  
• Leave the catheter cap in place.  
• Do **NOT** let the end of the catheter cap touch anything, including your body.

OR

Step 9 - B  
If You Do **NOT** Have a Green Alcohol Cover Over Your Catheter Cap  
• Open the alcohol wipe.  
• Scrub the catheter cap with the alcohol wipe for at least 10 seconds.  
• Let it dry completely.  
• **Do NOT** let the end of the catheter cap touch anything, including your body after it has been cleaned with alcohol.
Step 10

- Hold the catheter cap.
- Push in and screw the flush syringe onto the end of the catheter cap.

Step 11

- Open the clamp on the catheter.
Step 12

- Flush the line with the saline using a push pause method. The turbulence helps to keep your line clear.
- Firmly push 1cc then pause
- Continue to push 1cc and pause until the line is flushed with all 10 cc’s.
- If it is hard to push the flush, go to Step 19.
- Do not use force to flush.

Step 13

- Be sure that the clamp is over the wording “clamp here.”

- Close the clamp on the catheter. You should hear a click.
FLUSHING A CENTRAL LINE

Step 14

- Hold the catheter cap tightly and unscrew the syringe from the catheter.
- Be careful not to loosen the catheter cap from the catheter.

Step 15
Important! Always check to be sure the catheter cap is on tight!

Step 16

- Put a new green alcohol cover (Curos®) onto the catheter cap.
Step 17

- Now flush all the other lumens of the catheter. Do Steps 1 through 16 again.

Step 18

- After you flush all your lumens, throw your supplies away.

Step 19

- **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 12** 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 Oncology Nurse Navigator. You may need to come into clinic to have it looked at.

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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 affects 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. Updated July 2019.*