

Preventing Bloodstream Infections

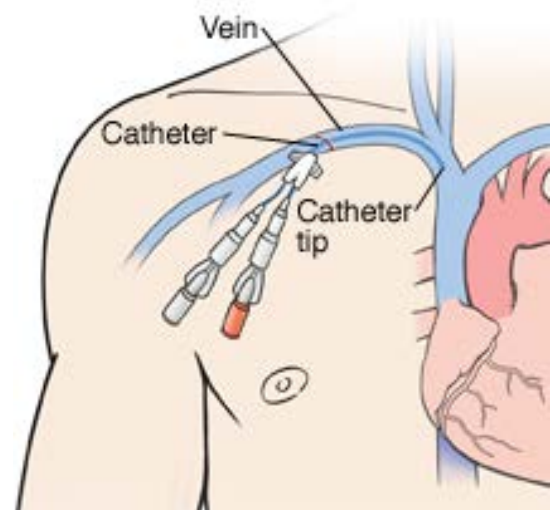
For patients who have central line catheters

This handout is for patients at University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC) who have a central line catheter during their hospital stay.

What is a central line catheter?

A *central line catheter* is a thin, flexible tube that is placed into a large vein. This vein may be in your neck, under your collar bone, or in your groin. These veins have a high blood flow and lead directly to your heart.

Compared to a usual IV (*intravenous*) line, a central line is larger, can stay in place longer, can deliver a greater volume of fluids, and allows blood to be drawn easily.



A central line catheter may be inserted under your collar bone.

Why do I need a central line catheter?

We prefer to use a central line when a patient needs many different types of IV medicines and fluids and will also need many blood draws. By using the central line, we can avoid giving you multiple injections over a short amount of time. Instead, we will use your central line to give you medicine, fluids, and nutrition during your hospital stay. If we need to do a blood test, we will draw blood through the catheter.

Why am I receiving this handout?

Central line catheters are very useful, but they can lead to an infection in your bloodstream. This is a serious infection, but it is very rare.

How does a central line catheter infection occur?

If bacteria (germs) travel down the catheter and get into your bloodstream, an infection can occur.

What are the signs of an infection?

Signs of infection are:

- Chills and fever
- Red and sore skin around the catheter insertion site

How is this infection treated?

If you get an infection, we will give you antibiotics. We may also remove the catheter..

How will you help prevent these infections?

When putting your catheter in place, your care team will:

- Choose a vein where they can insert the catheter safely, and where the risk of infection is low.
- Clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand gel before putting the catheter in place.
- Keep the catheter *sterile* (germ-free). This means they will wear a mask and cap, sterile gloves, and a sterile gown. You will be covered with a sterile sheet.
- Clean your skin with an agent that kills germs (an *antiseptic*) before they place the catheter.

After your catheter is in place, your care team will:

- Clean their hands, wear gloves, and clean the catheter opening with an antiseptic before using your catheter.
- Wear gloves when they change the bandage over your catheter insertion site.
- Carefully handle the medicines and fluids you receive through your catheter.
- Remove the catheter as soon as you do not need it.



If you do not see your care providers clean their hands, please ask them to.

What can I do to prevent a bloodstream infection from my central line catheter?

- Ask your care providers if they are following the above guidelines to prevent infection.
- Tell your nurse if the bandage over your catheter insertion site falls off or gets dirty or wet.
- Tell one of your care providers if the skin around your catheter is red or sore, you have chills, or you feel like you have a fever.
- Make sure there is always a cap in place at the end of your catheter. Tell your nurse if the cap is off for any reason.
- Make sure that all your care providers clean their hands before and after they care for you.
- Make sure your visitors clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand gel before they enter your room and when they leave.
- Do not let your visitors touch any part of your catheter or the bandage over your catheter insertion site.

If you have any questions about your central line catheter, please ask any of your care providers.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.