

Ways to Help Prevent Central Line Bloodstream Infections

A central line, also called a catheter or CVC, is a tube that is placed in a large vein in the neck, chest, arm or groin. It can be used to give medicines, fluids or blood.



A **bloodstream infection** is a problem that can happen when someone has a central line. It can be caused by germs that normally live on your skin or in your body. A central line bloodstream infection may cause fever or chills, or the skin around your line may become red and sore. The infection can be a serious problem. It may be treated with antibiotics and sometimes the line needs to be removed.

You and your family can help us **prevent central line bloodstream infections**. Use this handout to find out what you can do.

Ways you can help prevent infections

- Clean your hands often. Remind our staff and your visitors to do the same.
- Wear a mask when we change your central line dressing.
- Count to 15 as we scrub the hub (entrance) to access your line.
- Use medicated CHG (Chlorhexadine Gluconate) wipes or wash after your **daily** shower or bath.
- Ask your care team daily if your central line is still needed.
- Remind us to put the date on the IV tubing and dressing each time they are changed.
- Practice good hygiene. Do mouth care 2 times a day and take a daily shower or bath.
- Don't let family or friends touch the central line or tubing unless your nurse is teaching them how to care for it.

Tell us if you:

- notice the skin around your central line is red, sore or swollen, or if you see any drainage. These problems can be signs of infection.
- see that your central line dressing is wet, loose, dirty or bloody.
- want to take a shower or bath, so we can properly cover your dressing.
- have any concerns or questions.



Ways your health care team works to prevent infections



Central line care

- Cleans their hands before touching your line.
- Looks at your central line site often for signs of infection, such as redness, soreness, swelling or drainage.
- Wears a mask and gloves during central line dressing changes.
- Cleans the entrance of the line (hub) with an alcohol pad for 15 seconds and lets it dry before using your central line.
- Changes your line dressing at least once a week and more often if it is loose, wet or dirty. Your nurse signs and dates each new dressing.

Daily care

- Helps you do mouth care 2 times a day and take a daily shower or bath.
- Gives you CHG wipes or wash to use **daily** after your shower or bath and if needed, helps you to use them.
- Thinks about if your central line is still needed, or if can be removed.

If you leave the hospital with a central line catheter

- Make sure you know how to care for your central line **before** you leave. For example, how to keep it dry when taking a shower or when the dressing needs to be changed.
- Make sure you know who to call if you have any questions or concerns about your line or if the dressing is dirty, wet or loose.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer **before** touching your central line.
- Look for signs of an infection that may be caused by your central line, such as:
 - red, sore or swollen skin around the central line site
 - fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
 - drainage or pus from the central line site
 - shaking or chills



If you have any of the problems listed above, call your doctor right away.