Intermountain® Healthcare

PICC (Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter) in a Newborn

What is a PICC?

A PICC is a long, flexible tube (**catheter**) that is inserted through a small vein and threaded into a larger vein. When this tubing is threaded into a larger vein near the heart, it's called a **central line**.

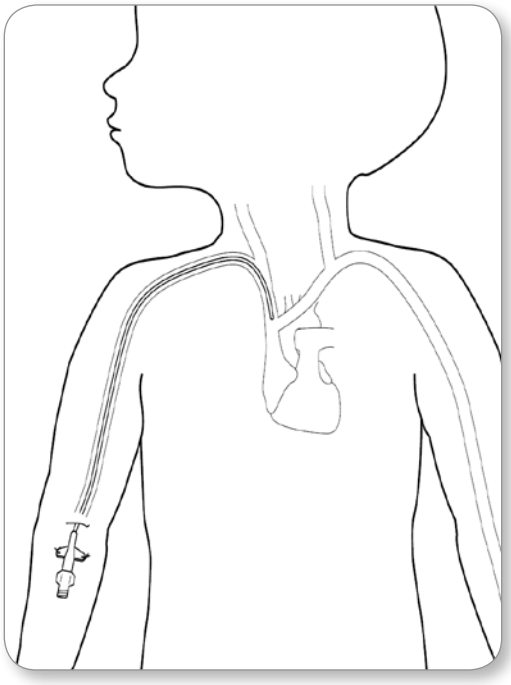
Why does my baby need a PICC?

A PICC is used for **IV (intravenous)** treatment — giving fluids, nutrition, or medication through a vein — especially when treatment is needed for several weeks. Having a PICC in place means that your baby won't need to have new IVs inserted each time treatment is needed. A PICC is also used with certain fluids and medications that can only be given through a central line.

How is a PICC inserted?

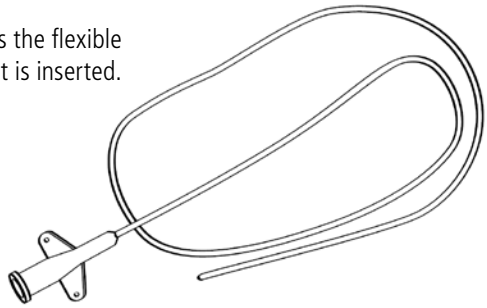
The procedure to place a PICC is done by a healthcare provider with special training, and generally takes 1 to 2 hours. Here's what happens before, during, and after the procedure:

- Before the PICC placement procedure, a healthcare provider may give medication to help the baby relax.
- To help prevent infection, the procedure is done using sterile technique. This means that the provider who inserts the PICC washes hands thoroughly and wears a mask, cap, sterile gown, and sterile gloves. The baby's skin is cleaned with an antiseptic solution, and the insertion site is covered with sterile cloths.
- The PICC is placed with a small needle. The needle goes through the baby's skin and into a vein. Once in place, the needle is removed, leaving the flexible PICC inside the vein. The PICC is then gently guided up until it reaches the intended place inside a larger vein.



This picture shows a PICC that is inserted into an arm vein and threaded into a vein near the heart.

A PICC can also be inserted into a vein in the leg, neck, or head.



This picture shows the flexible PICC before it is inserted.

- After the procedure, an x-ray is taken to make sure that the end of the PICC is in the proper place.
- The area where the PICC enters the baby's skin will be covered with a sterile bandage. (It's normal to see a little blood here at first.) This bandage is changed only if it becomes loose or soiled.

Are there any risks with a PICC?

As with any procedure or treatment, a PICC does involve a risk of complications. The most common possible complication is infection. If this happens, your baby will be given antibiotics and the PICC may need to be removed. Other possible complications are listed in the table below.

How will hospital staff care for my baby's PICC?

Your baby's healthcare providers will take special measures to prevent PICC complications. Here's what you can expect to see:

- When your baby is held or moved, healthcare providers will take care to prevent pulling or tension on the PICC.
- Providers will change the cap on the end of the PICC each week. While doing this, they'll wear gloves and clean the catheter opening with an antiseptic solution. *Note:* Only a doctor or nurse should change or open the cap on the end of the catheter.
- When drawing blood from a PICC, giving medication through a PICC, or changing the bandage that covers the insertion site, your baby's providers will clean their hands and wear gloves and a mask.
- Providers will carefully handle medications and fluids that are given through the PICC.

If you have any concerns about your baby's care, please talk to your baby's healthcare providers.

Talking with your baby's doctor about a PICC

The table below lists a PICC's most common potential benefits, risks, and alternatives. Other benefits and risks may apply in your baby's unique medical situation. Discuss these with your baby's healthcare provider and ask any questions you have.

Potential benefits	Risks and potential complications	Alternatives
• A PICC can stay in place for days or weeks, as needed, to provide IV treatments. • With a PICC, there is less irritation and damage to the veins than would be caused by multiple IV insertions and IV medications. • A PICC allows for delivery of a higher concentration of nutrients and medication.	• Infection • Need to repeat the insertion procedure if the end of the PICC cannot be positioned in the desired place inside a vein • PICC movement out of the desired position inside the vein • Bleeding, vein irritation, blood clot • PICC breaking inside the vein • Fluid leaking outside the vein	Alternatives depend on your baby's unique needs. Two possible options include: • Regular IVs • Central catheter (must be placed in an operating room)

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