

# Central Line-Associated Bloodstream Infections

## What is a central line-associated bloodstream infection?

A **central line**, also called a **central catheter** [KATH-i-ter], is a tube that is placed into a patient's large vein, often in the neck, chest, arm, or groin. The central line (catheter) is often used to draw blood or give fluids or medicines. It may be left in place for several weeks.

A serious bloodstream infection can occur when bacteria or other germs enter the blood through this catheter. This type of infection can often be successfully treated with antibiotics. The catheter might also need to be removed.

If you develop a central line-associated bloodstream infection:

- You may become ill with fever and chills.
- The skin around the central line may become sore and red.

**Preventing central line-associated infections is very important, both in the hospital (see below) and when you go home (see page 2).**

## Preventing central line-associated blood infections IN THE HOSPITAL

**YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS will do these things:**

- **Choose a vein** where the central line can be safely inserted and the risk for infection is small.
- **Follow safe practices** when putting in the central line (catheter) by:
  - Cleaning their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (see page 2).
  - Wearing sterile gloves, mask, cap, and gown.

- **Wash hands with soap and water** or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (see page 2) and wear sterile gloves when:
  - Cleaning the catheter opening with antiseptic solution before using it to draw blood.
  - Changing the dressing (bandage) that covers the area where the catheter goes into the skin.
  - Removing the catheter when no longer needed.
- **Check every day** to see if you still need the central line, and remove it as soon as possible.
- **Carefully handle medicines and fluids** given through the central line.

### YOU can do these things:

- Ask your healthcare providers:
  - Why do I need the central line?
  - How long will I have it?
  - Will my healthcare providers be using all prevention methods listed on this page?
- **Make sure that all healthcare providers clean their hands** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after caring for you (see page 2).
- **Avoid touching the central line** as much as possible. Keep the bandage and area around the catheter clean and dry. If your bandage comes off or gets wet or dirty, tell your healthcare providers immediately.
- **Make sure family and friends who visit you:**
  - Clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after visiting you (see page 2).
  - DO NOT touch the central line.

## Preventing central line associated bloodstream infections AT HOME

If you go home with a central line, your healthcare providers will explain how to take care of it. Follow the steps below to help prevent infection.

- Make sure you (and any caregivers) understand how to care for your central line before you leave the hospital. For example, you may want to ask:
  - How do I bathe with a central line?
  - How and when do I change the dressing?
  - What should I do if my line becomes disconnected?
  - What should I do if my dressing becomes soiled?
  - What if I feel heat or pain where the central line enters the skin?
- Always wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before handling your central line (see below). Caregivers should wear gloves if assisting.
- Watch for signs of infection such as fever or soreness or redness where the central line enters your body.

### When should I call my doctor?

Contact your healthcare provider if you:

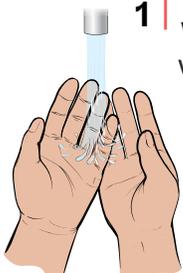
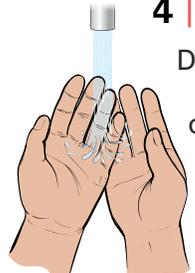
- Think you might have an infection (call immediately)
- Don't understand how to care for your central line
- Have any other questions

Healthcare provider:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Hand washing with soap and water

-  1 | Wet hands with warm, running water.
-  2 | Apply liquid soap or use a clean bar of soap. Lather well.
-  3 | Rub your hands together vigorously for at least 15 to 20 seconds. Be sure to scrub all surfaces of your hands and fingers.
-  4 | Rinse well. Dry your hands with a clean or disposable towel.
-  5 | Use a towel to turn off the faucet.

## Hand washing with a hand sanitizer

-  1 | Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Apply it to the palm of your hand. Read the label to see how much to apply.
-  2 | Be sure to cover all surfaces of your hands and fingers. Rub your hands together until they are dry.

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