

Infectious Diseases (Infections)

How did I get my infection?

Most infections are caused by germs (**bacteria**, **fungi** [FUN-jye], or **parasites**) that live on our bodies all the time. If you cut or scrape your skin, these germs can enter your body.

Most of the time, your body's immune [im-myoon] (disease-fighting) system destroys the germ before it can cause a problem. But sometimes the immune system can't destroy the germ and you get an infection.

You can also get infections when your immune system isn't working right, or if you catch a germ when out in the community or traveling to another country. Your healthcare provider will help you understand how your infection started.

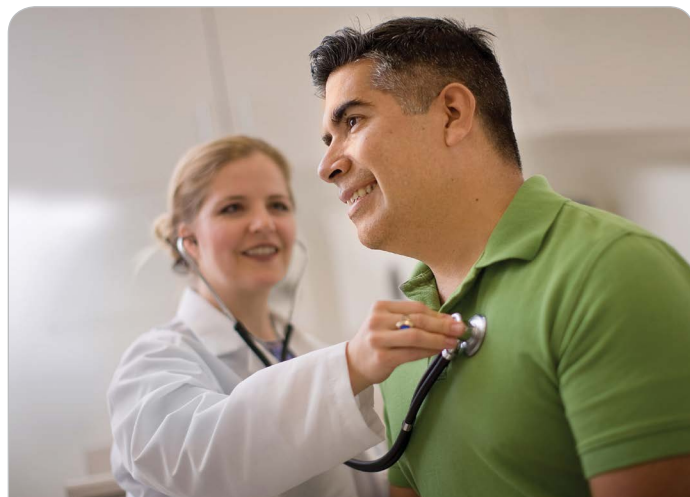
How are infections treated?

Most infections are treated with antimicrobial [an-tie-my-CROW-bee-uhl] medications, including:

- Antibiotics [an-tie-by-AH-tiks] to kill bacteria
- Antivirals [an-tie-VYE-rulz] to kill viruses
- Antifungals [an-tie-FUNG-alz] to kill fungi

Antimicrobial medications are only used to treat the specific type of germ that each drug was made to fight. For some infections, (the common cold, for example), antimicrobials won't work.

Antimicrobials can also cause side effects, cause problems with other medications, and may increase the chance of germs becoming resistant (fighting back) to the drug. All of these things must be considered when choosing a medication for your infection.



Intermountain Healthcare's infectious disease specialists diagnose and treat patients with a number of conditions. We are committed to providing excellent care and communicating with our patients with clarity and compassion.

Ask your healthcare provider about the pros and cons of each treatment option. And remember, all medication works best when taken exactly as directed by your healthcare provider.

How do I know if my infection is getting better?

There is not a single test that can tell your healthcare provider if your infection is getting better. To see how your body is responding to treatment, your provider will usually:

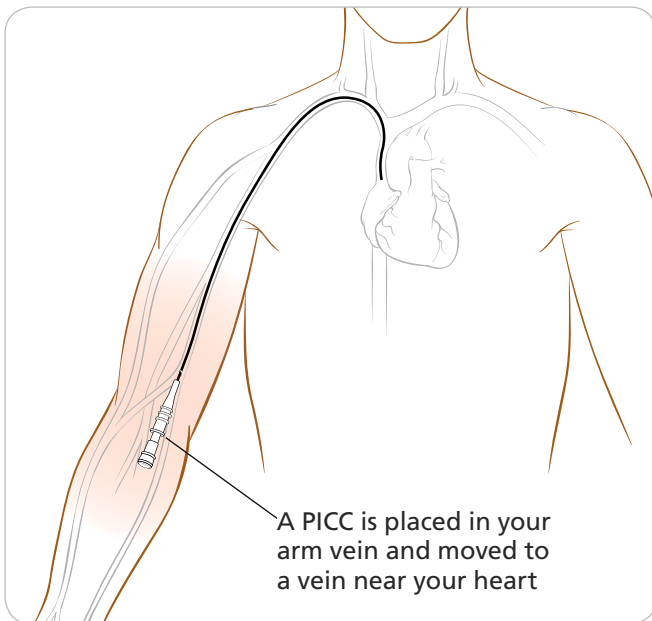
- Ask about your symptoms
- Check cultures and the results of other lab tests
- Order imaging tests, if needed

Your provider will go over your results with you at your visit.

What is a PICC line and how do I care for it?

A PICC [pik] line is a long flexible tube (catheter) that is inserted into a large vein in your arm and then carefully moved into a large vein above your heart.

PICC lines are used to draw blood or to give medicines over a long period of time, for example, when you have an infection. It is important to tell your care team if you have any bleeding, redness or discharge around your PICC line site. If your PICC line is knocked loose or pulled out for any reason, **tell your doctor right away**. Also, please tell us if you have any swelling in the arm that the PICC line is in because this might be a sign of blood clot.



When and how will my PICC be removed?

Your PICC will be removed when you no longer need the treatment it is delivering. It will be removed by your healthcare provider.

Can I give my infection to others?

Most of the infections that we treat in our office are not contagious [con-TAY-juss] (easily spread to others), but some are. If your infection is contagious, your healthcare provider will help you know how it is spread and what you can do to keep from spreading it to others.

When should I call my doctor?

New symptoms are sign of a change in your infection. Call your healthcare provider right away if you are having any of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Chills
- Rash
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Jaundice (yellow skin or eyes)
- New or worsening pain
- Swelling in your arms or legs
- Severe headache
- Confusion
- Dizziness
- Loss of consciousness (fainting)
- Numbness
- Weakness
- Wound drainage
- Any other new symptom

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