

# UMBILICAL CATHETER

SAINT BARNABAS MEDICAL CENTER  
NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

## **What is an umbilical catheter?**

An umbilical catheter is a tiny plastic tube that is placed into a blood vessel in the umbilical cord of a newborn baby. The catheter can be placed in either a vein or an artery.

## **Why is an umbilical catheter used?**

- Blood samples can be taken without having to stick your baby with a needle.
- Blood pressure can be watched very closely if the catheter is placed in the artery.
- Blood transfusions can be given through the umbilical catheter.
- Intravenous (IV) fluids and medications can be given through the umbilical catheter.

## **How is an umbilical catheter inserted?**

Your Baby's doctor will clean the umbilical cord with special soap and then insert the catheter into the blood vessel. This is done right in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at your baby's bedside. The catheter will be held in place with one or two stitches and special tape, called a bridge. After the catheter is in place, an x-ray will be done to make sure it is in the right place.

## **What happens while the umbilical catheter is in place?**

- Plastic tubing will be attached to the catheter to give IV fluids, medications, and/or blood.
- If the catheter is in the umbilical artery your baby's blood pressure will be continuously monitored.
- Nurses will need to check your baby's feet and legs or hands and arms often to make sure they have good circulation.

## **How is the umbilical catheter taken out?**

When it is no longer needed, the doctor will take out the catheter. They will hold pressure on the umbilical cord for a time to prevent bleeding.

**If you have any further questions, please ask your nurse or doctor.**