

# PERIPHERALLY INSERTED CENTRAL CATHETER (PICC)

SAINT BARNABAS MEDICAL CENTER  
NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

## **What is a PICC Line?**

Your doctor may recommend that your baby receive a special type of IV catheter called a PICC (Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter) or PCVC (Percutaneous Central Venous Catheter) during his/her hospital stay. This special IV catheter can provide your baby with better IV nutrition and will decrease the number of IV sticks your baby receives.

## **How is the PICC Line used?**

The catheter is very thin and is inserted through a needle (similar to a regular IV needle) in either the arm (at the elbow area), the armpit, or in the leg. Occasionally, the catheter may be inserted in the neck or scalp, but these are not the most common places. The catheter enters the arm in a smaller vein and is threaded into a larger vein, close to the heart (the vena cava). This allows us to give higher concentrations of sugar to the baby, which helps him or her gain weight better.

The catheter is inserted under completely sterile conditions.

What are the risks involved in getting a PICC line?

- Bleeding – usually very minimal and is controlled by pressure to the site until the bleeding stops.
- Infection - strict sterile technique is maintained during the insertion. However, your baby will be at higher risk for infection because his or her immune system is immature. Infection is seen more often when the line has been in place for a long time.
- Abnormal position of the catheter - the catheter location is confirmed by X-ray. Very rarely, the catheter may travel outside the vein and must be removed. This is a later potential complication.

## **How is the catheter kept in place?**

The catheter is secured in a very special way to minimize accidental removal or damage to it. If your baby is big enough and clinically stable enough to be held, he or she may be held with this line in place. It is very important that the tape is secure before you hold your baby, so please ask your nurse to check the tape and have the nurse help you take the baby out of the isolette each time you hold him or her.

Although the goal is to have this line in place for as short a time as possible, it is safe to keep this line in place for several months if necessary. The catheter may be removed if infection is suspected or if the catheter clots or breaks.

**Please ask the doctor or nurse if you have any questions about this procedure.**