

# Caring for Your Central Venous Catheter at Home

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If you or a caregiver will be **changing the end cap or bandage** or **flushing the line**, please follow the step-by-step written directions for each of these skills. If you have questions or concerns, call your clinic or home care nurse.

## General care

- For the first few weeks, do not do any hard or heavy exercise. Too much activity may cause the catheter to get pulled out. Talk to your doctor before doing any activity or sports. Activities that use your arm a lot, such as weight lifting or golf, may harm your catheter.
- Avoid carrying bags or purses over your “tunneled catheter” shoulder.
- Pad your chest if wearing a seat belt causes discomfort.
- Secure the CVC so it does not get caught on your clothing.
- Keep the line away from sharp objects.
- Always follow the instructions for flushing the line.
- Keep the clamps closed unless you are using the line.
- Always have an emergency clamp with you.
- Store all supplies in a clean, dry place.

## Prevent infection

You may get an infection if germs enter where the end cap connects to your CVC or the place where the line goes into your body.

- Wash your hands well before touching your CVC or any supplies. Use liquid soap and water.
- Make sure the bandage stays clean and dry and is sticking well to your skin. If you were trained to do so, change the bandage if it gets wet or dirty. Otherwise, call your clinic or nurse.
- If you are going to take a shower, cover the bandage and tubing with plastic wrap and tape the edges well. Keep your chest away from the shower spray.
- Before you connect any tubing or syringe, scrub the end cap with alcohol for 15 seconds.

## What to do if you have problems

### *The end cap comes off:*

1. Close the clamp.
2. Clean the end of the CVC with alcohol for 15 seconds.
3. Put on a new end cap and tell your nurse at once.

### ***The CVC breaks or leaks:***

Place the emergency clamp between the break and your skin. If you do not have a clamp, fold or pinch off the tubing below the hole or break in the line.

Call the your nurse or clinic right away.

### ***You have chest pain, shortness of breath or feel faint:***

1. Look for a hole or loose end cap.
2. Put the emergency clamp on the CVC as close to the skin as possible.
3. Remain calm and call 911. Then explain your symptoms and state that you have a central line.
4. Lie on your left side.

### ***You see swelling of the skin at the site or feel pain, heat, burning or cold:***

1. Call your nurse or clinic.
2. Do not use the CVC.

### ***You can see the cuff at the exit site:***

If a piece of fuzzy material starts to come out at the exit site, we will have to replace your CVC. This “cuff” helps prevent accidental removal of the line and should stay under the skin.

### ***Your CVC falls out:***

It is not likely to fall out by accident. If it does:

1. Put firm pressure on the exit site with clean gauze if handy.
2. When the bleeding stops, cover the site with clean gauze and tape.
3. Call your nurse or clinic.

### ***Call your clinic or nurse right away if:***

- You are not able to flush your line. (Check that the clamp is open when flushing.)
- You see signs of infection (the skin is red, swollen, tender or draining).
- You have pain in your arm or shoulder on the same side as your catheter.
- You have swelling of your hand, arm, neck or face on the same side as your catheter. This could be a sign of a blockage in your vein.
- Your temperature taken under the tongue is 100.5°F (37.8°C) or higher.
- You replaced an end cap that fell off.
- Your CVC breaks, leaks or falls out.

### **Where to call**

Clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Monday to Friday office hours: \_\_\_\_\_

Evenings and weekends: \_\_\_\_\_