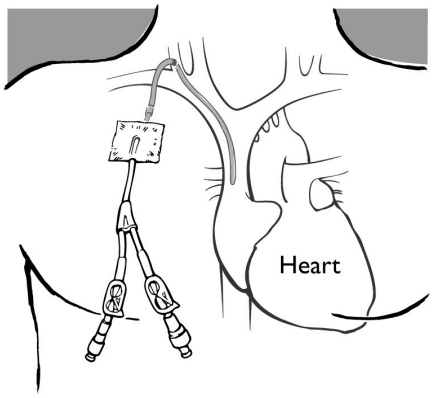
vitalcare INFUSION SERVICES

Your Tunneled Central Catheter for Home IV Therapy

Introduction

Your prescriber has recommended **intravenous (IV) medications** as a part of your treatment. To give you these intravenous medications (also called **infusions**), your prescriber has inserted a device called a **tunneled central venous catheter (CVC)**.



The "tunneling" procedure used by the surgeon during placement makes these catheters very secure once they are healed. They can stay in place and be used for many years without complication. Hickman, Broviac, and Groshong are all brand names of **tunneled** catheters.

A CVC is a thin tube made of a very soft and flexible material. It comes in different sizes and lengths. The most appropriate size and length will be chosen for you by your surgeon.

The central venous catheter is "threaded" through a tunnel on your chest; the tip of the catheter put into a vein in your chest or neck and ends about one (1) inch before your heart.

Important Points about Your Catheter

- When properly maintained, a CVC may be kept in place for an extended period of time.
- Your home care nurse will provide you with verbal and written information on how to maintain the catheter. Infection and damage may be avoided by following these instructions.
- Always feel free to ask questions if you are uncertain about using or maintaining your CVC.
- Your CVC must always be covered with a sterile dressing while it is healing. These dressings can prevent infections. They are typically changed about once a week. After the catheter site has healed, your prescriber may tell you not to use dressings.
- In addition to the dressing, your CVC should be secured to your skin with a piece of sterile tape and/or a securing device to prevent tugging and pulling. The "tunnel" created by the surgeon helps keep your catheter from falling out.

However, it should still have a piece of tape securing it, especially if you are engaging in strenuous activities.

- Frequent hand washing will help prevent infections.
- Medication is inserted through the CVC by attaching the administration tubing to the needleless connector that your nurse will place on the end of the catheter.
- Always clean the needleless connector with an alcohol pad for at least 15 seconds before attaching the administration tubing.
- If treated correctly with saline and heparin "flushing" medications, your catheter should not become clotted or clogged. Let your home care nurse or pharmacist know immediately if the catheter is not performing properly.
- While your catheter is in place, you can engage in your usual activities, within reason. As long as the dressing is kept dry, secured, and intact, there are no strict limitations. Avoid tub baths.
- Always consult with your nurse before engaging in any strenuous activities.
- Avoid movement of the catheter at any time.

Signs or Symptoms to Report to Your Nurse or Pharmacist

- Pain or tenderness around your catheter
- Pain or tenderness while your infusion is being given
- Puffiness or swelling around your catheter exit site or anywhere on your chest, neck, or arm
- Redness or any drainage around your exit site
- Fever
- Clogging inside your catheter or a suddenly "sluggish" infusion
- Bleeding from your catheter
- Leaking of medications from your catheter
- Ringing in your ears or any pain in your ears or neck during your medication
- Heart palpitations
- Lightheadedness, dizziness, or fainting

Notes and Instructions