DANBURY HOSPITAL
A Higher Level of Care

Danbury Hospital Patient Education Sheet

What is a Central Line-Associated Bloodstream Infection?

What is a central line-associated bloodstream infection?

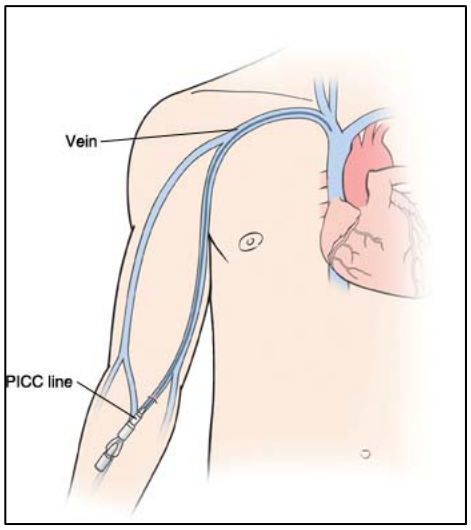
A bloodstream infection occurs when bacteria or germs travel along a "central line" and enter the blood. A central line is a very thin catheter or tube that is placed in a large vein in the neck, chest, arm, or groin. It is used to take blood samples and to give fluids and/or medications. The central line may be left in place for several weeks, or for the duration of a treatment.

Central line-associated bloodstream infections can be serious; however, they can often be successfully treated with antibiotics. If an infection develops, the central line may need to be removed.

What is usually done in the hospital to prevent a central line-associated bloodstream infection?

There are measures that physicians and nurses take to prevent central line-associated bloodstream infections. These include:

- ✓ Cleaning their hands with soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand hygiene product prior to putting a central line in, and prior to touching a central line that is already in.
- ✓ Choosing a vein where the central line can be safely put in and where the risk for infection is less.
- ✓ Wearing a mask, cap, sterile gown, and sterile gloves when putting a central line in to keep the area sterile.
- ✓ Putting a large sterile sheet over the patient when putting a central line in.



- ✓ Cleaning the skin with an antiseptic cleaner before central line placement.
- ✓ Cleaning the central line opening with an antiseptic cleaner before drawing blood or giving a medication.
- ✓ Evaluating every day if the central line needs to remain in or can be taken out. The central line will be removed as soon as it is no longer needed.

What can I do as the patient or family member to prevent a central line-associated bloodstream infection?

If you do not see your physician, nurse, or any other healthcare provider wash his/her hands before caring for you or your central line, please ask them to do so.

- If the bandage comes off or becomes wet or dirty, tell your physician or nurse so that it can be changed immediately. The

bandage helps to provide a barrier against germs from traveling down the catheter tubing and under your skin.

- Tell your physician or nurse if you notice the area of skin around your central line becoming reddened or sore.
- Do not touch the area where the central line goes under your skin and try to prevent from pulling on the central line tubing.
- Do not let family or friends touch the central line or tubing.
- Ask your family and friends to wash their hands with soap and water or use the alcohol-based hand hygiene product before and after visiting you.

Are there any special instructions when I go home with the central line?

If you need to go home with your central line still in place, your physician and/or nurse will teach you how to care for your central line while at home. It is important to know how to care for your central line before leaving the hospital.

- ✓ Be sure to ask questions about bathing or showering while the central line is still in.
- ✓ Know how to contact your physician if you should have any problems with your central line once you are home.
- ✓ Wash your hands before handling your central line.
- ✓ Do not let family or friends touch your central line unless they are helping you to care for it. If they are helping you, make sure that they wash their hands before touching you or the central line.
- ✓ Watch for signs of infection that need to be reported to your physician.

What are the symptoms of an infection?

Know the symptoms of infection

- Fever
- Soreness or pain around the insertion site of the catheter
- Redness of the skin around the insertion site
- Drainage from the insertion site
- General feeling of fatigue and weakness

If you notice one or more of these symptoms while you are home, call your physician.

It is important to schedule your follow-up physician appointment after leaving the hospital and to keep this appointment so that your physician can monitor your central line and determine when the best time is to remove it.

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov

The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America at www.shea-online.org

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For more information, or to learn about the specialized services and programs available at Danbury Hospital, please visit www.DanburyHospital.org