

Having a Central Line

HAEMATOLOGY UNIT

Patient Information Leaflet



What are central lines?

A central line is a long, thin, hollow tube made of silicone. They may also be referred to as central venous catheters or Hickman lines. The line is inserted into a large vein behind the collarbone and tunnelled under the skin of your chest where it comes out. The tip of the line rests just above the entrance to your heart. The line may be single or double and has a clamp to keep it closed when not in use. It also has a cap on the end of the line.

What is the central line used for?

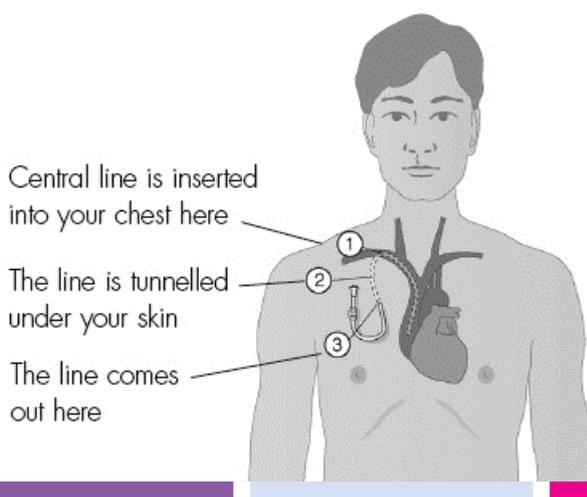
A central line can be left in place for several months and is used to give chemotherapy, antibiotics, blood transfusions and to take blood samples. This means you do not have to have needles put into your arms so often.

How is the line put in?

The line is put in, at the hospital, by a doctor. It is usually done under local anaesthetic but may be done under general anaesthetic. You will have a small stitch near your collarbone and another one where the line comes out on your chest (exit site). You should not feel any pain when the line is put in but you may feel bruised when the local anaesthetic wears off.

What keeps the line in place?

There is a small cuff on the line that lies under the skin. The body tissue grows round the cuff and keeps it in place. A dressing is put over the exit site.



How is the line looked after?

When your line is not being used, there is a small risk that it will become blocked. In order to stop this happening, it will be flushed once or twice a week. The dressing on the exit site is also changed once a week. The nurses at the hospital or the district nurse usually change the dressing.

Are there any problems with central lines?

Infection

It is possible to develop an infection inside the line or at the exit site. You must contact the Haematology/Oncology unit if

You develop a raised temperature

The exit site becomes sore, red or swollen

You notice any discharge from the exit site

You may need to have a course of antibiotics. If there is severe infection, the line may have to be removed.

Blood Clot

It is possible for a blood clot to form in the vein. This will need treatment. You must contact the unit if you notice any swelling or pain in your arm or neck on the side where the line is placed.

Air in catheter

It is very important to prevent air getting into the catheter. Always make sure the clamps are closed and the cap in place when the line is not being used.

Cut or split in the line

It is also important not to damage the line. If the line is cut or split, clamp the line above the cut and contact the Haematology/Oncology unit immediately. It may be possible to repair the line or it may need to be removed.

How is the central line removed?

The line is taken out when you do not need it any more. The doctor can do this on the unit using local anaesthetic. It does not take very long. You should contact the Haematology/Oncology unit if you have any worries or questions about your central line.

Haematology Day Unit Tel. 01253 956836

Oncology Day Unit Tel. 01253 956835

Monday - Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm

Options available

If you'd like a large print, audio, Braille or a translated version of this booklet then please call **01253 655588**

Patient Relations Department

For information or advice please contact the Patient Relations Department via the following:

Tel: **01253 655588**
email: **patient.relations@bfwh.nhs.uk**

You can also write to us at:
Patient Relations Department
Blackpool Victoria Hospital
Whinney Heys Road
Blackpool
FY3 8NR

Further information is available on our website: **www.bfwh.nhs.uk**

Travelling to our sites

For the best way to plan your journey to any of the local sites visit our travel website:
www.bfwhospitals.nhs.uk/departments/travel/

Useful contact details

Main Switchboard:
01253 300000

Monday - Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm
Haematology Day Unit Tel. 01253 956836

Oncology Day Unit Tel. 01253 956835

Haematology Ward Tel. 01253 953403 - outside the above hours

References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:
Policy Co-ordinator/Archivist
01253 303397



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