

What you need to know about your central line.

What is a central line?

A central line is an intravenous catheter, or thin flexible tube that is inserted into a large vein. It is used to give medications and fluids and to draw blood for testing. This catheter may be left in for several days, weeks or months.

What is a central line infection?

If bacteria or germs get into the catheter, you may develop an infection. Signs of infection may include drainage from the site, redness and/or soreness around the catheter, chills or fever. This type of infection is called a central line infection.

Can this type of infection be treated?

An infection of a central catheter is serious. However, antibiotics can usually treat the infection, and the infection will go away. The catheter may need to be removed if an infection is present.

What is Newton-Wellesley Hospital doing to prevent this type of infection?

1. Choosing the safest vein to place the catheter.
2. Cleaning our hands with alcohol-based hand cleaner or soap and water just before putting the catheter in.
3. Wearing masks, sterile gloves and gowns, and covering the patient with a sterile drape while inserting the catheter.
4. Cleaning the patient's skin with a special type of antiseptic.
5. Cleaning the catheter tip and cap each time the catheter is used to administer medications or draw blood.
6. Cleaning hands and wearing gloves when changing the bandage that covers the area.
7. Removing the central line as soon as it is no longer needed.

What you can do to prevent a central line bloodstream infection.

1. Ask your doctors and nurses why you need the catheter and how long it might be in.
2. Make sure that everyone cleans their hands before and after caring for you.
3. Tell your doctor or nurse if the bandage comes off or becomes wet or dirty.
4. Tell your doctor or nurse if the area becomes red or sore or if you notice any drainage from the site.
5. Do not let family or friends touch the catheter or tubing.
6. Make sure that family and friends clean their hands right before and after visiting you in the hospital.

What you need to do when you come home from the hospital if the catheter is still in.

1. Make sure you know how to care for the catheter at home.
2. Know how you will shower or bathe with the catheter.
3. Know the plan for changing the bandage covering the catheter.
4. Know who to contact if you have any questions or problems.
5. Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based gel before handling your catheter.
6. Call your health care provider if you notice any drainage from the site, if the area becomes red or sore or if you develop a fever or swelling of the arm.

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