

Tips to Thrive

CARING FOR YOUR CENTRAL VENOUS CATHETER

THE STRESS OF EVERYDAY LIFE can result in changes to the way a consumer cares for their central venous catheter (CVC), but it's important not to take shortcuts. These everyday tips can help you properly care for your line.

WASH YOUR HANDS

This cannot be said enough. Washing your hands is the single most effective way to eliminate bacteria and decrease your chances of exposure.

SCRUB THE HUB

Scrubbing the hub of the catheter cap with alcohol for at least 15 seconds is a proven method to kill all bacteria, no matter what type of cap or connection.

KEEP IT SAFE AND SECURE

Keep your line safely secured and anchored close to the dressing and exit site to prevent tension directly on the line when infusing. Also, always keep lines away from wound and ostomy sites.

Some people use an adhesive medical product to stabilize a line against their skin (Grip-Lok®, Flexi-Trak®, and Cath-Secure®). These can also be used for securing enteral tubes.

KEEP IT DRY

Keeping the site of a CVC clean and dry is an important part of line maintenance, especially for individuals on parenteral nutrition (PN). A moist CVC site or a catheter cap contaminated from lack of cleansing is a breeding ground for bacteria, potentially leading to a catheter-related blood stream infection or other complications

Do everything you can to keep the dressing, cap, and external catheter dry and protected. When in doubt, change the dressing and cap. If your dressing gets wet, it needs to be changed. Schedule dressing changes after bathing or exercising. If your physician allows swimming in the ocean or pool, always change your dressing afterward.



LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

Learn to recognize your body's early-warning symptoms of an infection. With a central line, taking your temperature daily is a must. If you have a fever, assume it is a line infection until proven otherwise. Contact your home care nurse and/or doctor if you have a fever greater than 100.5 degrees. Remember to get plenty of rest so that your immune system is at its best.

TOO MANY COOKS

Be your line's guardian and watch over the care that is given. Limit the number of people who manipulate your line, and only allow people whom you trust to touch your line, dressing, or cap. It is a good idea to review your line protocol with all new caregivers. If you are not comfortable with their technique, it is OK to ask them not to touch it.

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