UNDERSTANDING Intravenous Lines



An **intravenous** (IV) line is a small tube inserted in a **vein**. The IV line allows the health care team to deliver fluids, **nutrients**, medicines, or blood to the baby as needed.

The main types of IV lines used in the NICU are **peripheral** lines and central lines. A special type of central line called a **PICC** line is very common.

What is a peripheral IV line?

Peripheral means "on the edge". In the NICU, peripheral IVs go into a baby's hand, foot, arm, leg, or scalp (head). While scalp IVs may look unpleasant, they are often the easiest (and least painful) way to put in a peripheral IV. That's because babies (especially premature babies) often don't have large, easy-to-access veins in other places.

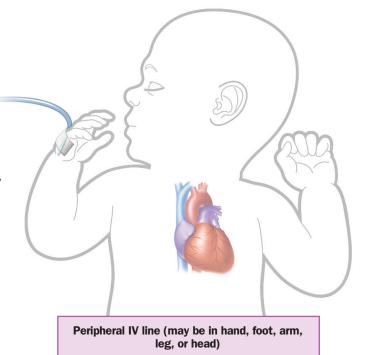
Peripheral IVs are very common. They are relatively easy to insert but cannot be used for more than a few days. Then they need to be removed and replaced. That means another needle stick for your baby.

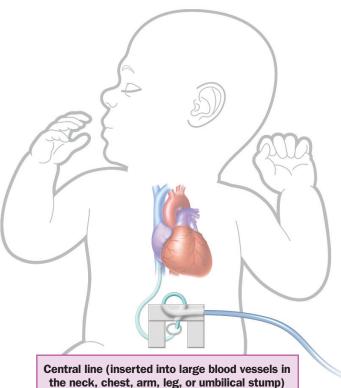


Central IV lines are inserted into large blood vessels in the neck, chest, arm, leg, or umbilical stump. The line extends into the body and ends near the heart.

Central IV lines are more work to insert than peripheral lines. Some need to be placed by a surgeon. After insertion, it's common for the baby to have an X-ray to make sure the central line is in the right place. Central lines often can stay in the body for weeks. Fewer IV changes mean less discomfort for your baby.

Talk to the NICU team to learn more about the uses and risks of these types of IV lines.





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What is a PICC line?

PICC lines are a type of central IV line. PICC stands for peripherally inserted central catheter. **Catheter** is the medical term for a tube put into the body.

A PICC line is inserted in a small (peripheral) vein away from the center of the body. It is then threaded through other veins until the end of the PICC line is near the heart.

Babies will often have an X-ray to make sure the PICC line is in the right place.

Like other types of central lines, PICC lines often can stay in place for weeks. That means fewer needle sticks for your baby.

PICC line (inserted into a small vein and threaded through other veins until the end of the PICC line is near the heart)

If you have any questions about IV lines, or any information contained on this sheet, talk to the NICU team.

Glossary

Catheter – medical term for a tube put into the body

Intravenous - through a vein

Nutrient – a substance that promotes growth, provides energy, and maintains life

Peripheral – on the edge

PICC – peripherally inserted central catheter; an IV line that starts away from the center of the body and ends near the heart

Vein – blood vessel that carries blood back to the heart

Ask the health care team when you have questions—they are there to help.

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