

Living with a Central Venous Catheter



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Problems

Infections:

Signals

- Fever, chills, lethargy, irritability. Redness, swelling, heat, pain or oozing at the exit site.

What to do?

- Call your doctor or nurse. You will need treatment.

How to avoid it

- Wash hands before beginning any procedure. Maintain sterility while performing the procedures.
- If you have a cold, wear a mask while performing the procedure.

Loose, cracked or disconnected cap:

Signals

- Cap is loose or off. Leaking around the cap.

What to do?

- Ensure the clamp is on securely. Cover the open end with a 2 x 2 gauze.
- Heparin lock the catheter and change the cap. (Don't reuse the old one!)

How to avoid it

- Test that the cap is secure when changing it.

Break in the catheter:

Signals

- Leaking fluid.

What to do?

- Immediately clamp catheter (CARRY A CLAMP WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES) at a point between the break and the exit site. Place sterile gauze around the break.
- Contact the **Emergency Department** at once to repair the line.

How to avoid it

- Keep scissors and other sharp objects away from the catheter. Use only the plastic clamp on the catheter and clamp along area indicated. Remember to shift the position of the clamp.

Blood backing into catheter:

Signals

- Blood in the catheter

What to do

- Heparin lock the catheter as instructed by the nurse. If the problem continues contact the emergency department or your clinic for advice.

How to avoid it

- Be sure that you clamp the catheter as you flush with the syringe when flushing the CVC, or if using a positive cap, clamp the catheter after you remove the syringe

Air in the catheter:

Signals

- Shortness of breath and/or chest pain. Break or opening in catheter.

What to do

- This is an **EMERGENCY**.
- Clamp the catheter near the exit site. Lie the child down on his/her left side with head down.
- Phone an ambulance and go to the nearest Emergency Department.

How to avoid it

- Never leave the cap loose or off without clamping the catheter. Carry a spare metal clamp at all times.

Plugged catheter:

Signals

- Resistance in the catheter during flushing procedure.

What to do

- **Do not use extra pressure.** Check that the clamp is open. If this is not causing the problem, remove the syringe. Contact your doctor, clinic or emergency department.

How to avoid it

- Flush (heparin lock) the catheter as instructed by the nurse. When flushing, clamp while still pushing fluid into the CVC so that blood cannot back into the catheter.
- If using a positive pressure cap, do not clamp catheter until you remove the syringe from the cap.

Dislodged catheter:

Signals

- Bleeding at entrance/exit site.

What to do

- This is an **EMERGENCY**.
- Press on the incision at the entrance site on the neck and the exit site where the catheter was with 2 fingers. Apply pressure for about 5 minutes to stop bleeding.
- Go to the nearest Emergency Department. Tape a dressing over exit site firmly while transporting to Emergency.

How to avoid it

- Ensure catheter is coiled under dressing, use a clear, occlusive dressing and keep the catheter securely taped and pinned to clothing.

Living with a CVC

As normal as possible

Once you return home, we encourage you to treat your child as normally as possible. Protect the CVC as much as you can, but don't overprotect your child. Set and keep clear, reasonable limits to help them feel safe with the CVC. All children, even sick children, need the opportunity to play, participate in family life and experience the world.

The rest of the family needs care too!

The extra care and monitoring required when you are caring for a sick child with a CVC can be stressful for the whole family and exhausting for you. It is hard not to let it consume all family life. This is a time for the family to be open and honest with each other, to share their frustrations and misgivings so that resentments don't build and each can offer support to the other.

One of the most helpful ways to avoid "burn out" is to schedule breaks for the caretakers. Some rest and an occasional night out will do wonders for your spirits and your relationship with the other important people in your life. If you have other children, they may resent the attention you give this child. No amount of explaining is as helpful as spending time alone with your other children.

Babysitters, teachers and others who care for your child

You will feel much more comfortable when you are out if the babysitter knows about the CVC and is aware of the significant signs that indicate a problem. Review these with the sitter and make sure that he/she knows the appropriate action to take (use this pamphlet for the review). Leave important telephone numbers beside the phone. Show the sitter where you keep the spare clamp.

Before your child returns to school or any other group activity, make sure the teachers/instructors have the information and equipment they will need to deal with a problem should it arise. You can give them a copy of this pamphlet. Please talk with your social worker if it would be helpful to have someone visit the school to talk with the staff or children.

Activities

Allow your child to determine his/her readiness for activities as far as possible. You know your child and can judge what is reasonable. The only things your child must avoid are rough physical contact sports. If your child wants to swim, talk to the nurse about how to protect the line.

Outings

ALWAYS CARRY A SPARE CLAMP WITH YOU.

Clothing

Have your child wear a snugly fitting T-shirt over the CVC. This helps to hold it in place and discourages young children from handling or pulling on the line. **Always secure the CVC to the T-shirt with a safety pin attached to the tape.**

Supplies

Supply kits are available from the Outpatient Pharmacy in Children's Hospital. Ask your doctor for the prescription for a CVC kit.

Arrange to restock your supplies at least one week before you run out by calling the Outpatient Pharmacy in Children's Hospital 604-875-2205. A prescription is not required for restocking supplies.

You are not alone

CVC procedures, which you have handled so confidently in the hospital, may suddenly seem more than you can handle, without support, at home. Please do not feel that you are entirely alone once you go home. The support and advice of the nurses is still available to you. Please feel free to call us should you have any questions or concerns and even if all is well. We are always pleased to know how you and your child are getting on.



Contacts:

Community Nurse _____

Telephone: _____

Doctor _____

Telephone: _____

Hospital Nurse or other contact

Telephone: _____

At BC Children's Hospital we believe parents are partners on the health care team. We want you to be as informed as possible. This brochure will answer some of your questions. Please ask about things you do not understand and share your concerns.

If you have any questions, please call one of the contacts listed above.

Developed by the health care professionals of the Oncology/Haematology/BMT Department and Parenteral Therapy with assistance from the Department of Learning & Development.