

Living with a Central Venous Line (CVL)



Home IV Therapy Program

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www.bcchildrens.ca

Stay safe. Always carry a spare metal clamp and sterile gauze with you.

What should I watch out for?

Infection

- **Signs:**
 - A fever of over 38 degrees Celsius in the armpit, or 38.5 degrees Celsius under the tongue.
 - Chills.
 - Redness, swelling, heat, pain or oozing at the exit site.
 - Your child is grouchy or tired.
- **What to do:**
 - Call your doctor or nurse immediately. Your child needs treatment.
- **How to avoid it:**
 - Wash your hands before doing anything with the CVL.
 - Follow instructions from your nurse. Your nurse will tell you how to reduce the risk of infection.
 - If you are sick, have another caregiver perform care on the CVL if you can. Or, talk to your nurse clinician.

Loose, cracked, or disconnected cap

- **Signs:**
 - The cap is loose or off.
 - Fluid or blood leaking from the cap.
- **What to do if the cap is loose:**
 - You may tighten it.
- **What to do if the cap is cracked:**
 - Make sure the clamp is on.
 - Clean the connection site for 30 seconds with a chlorhexidine/alcohol swab.
 - Let dry for 1 minute.
 - Put on a new cap.
 - Re-heparinize the line through the new cap. **Do not reuse the old cap.**
- **What to do if the cap is disconnected:**
 - Make sure the clamp is on.
 - Cover the end with sterile gauze as quickly as you can.
 - Clean the connection site for 30 seconds with a chlorhexidine/alcohol swab.
 - Let dry for 1 minute.
 - Put on a new cap.
 - **Contact your nurse clinician or physician-on-call before you re-heparinize your child's line. You may need to come in to the hospital to have the CVL assessed.**
- **How to avoid it:** Check that the cap is secure when you change it.

Break in the catheter

- **Signs:**
 - Leaking fluid when you flush the catheter
 - Blood coming from the line.
- **What to do:**
 - **Clamp** the catheter between the exit site and the break with your spare metal clamp.
 - **Cover** the break with sterile gauze.
 - **Call** your nurse clinician or the Emergency Department **right away**. They will need to repair the line.
- **How to avoid it:**
 - Keep scissors and sharp objects away from the catheter.
 - Only use the plastic clamp on the catheter unless it is an emergency. Clamp along the marked area.
 - When you re-heparinize, change the position of the clamp along the marked area. This will prevent the line from breaking down.

Blood backing into catheter

- **Signs:**
 - Blood in the catheter.
- **What to do:**
 - Re-heparinize the catheter. If this does not help, contact your nurse clinician or clinic.
- **How to avoid it:**
 - Use the **turbulent flushing method** when you re-heparinize your child's line.

The **turbulent flushing**

method helps to rinse the lumen, and is done by giving a quick push of solution, pausing, and giving another quick push, etc

- After you push the right amount of heparin, clamp the line.

Air in the catheter: **EMERGENCY**

- **Signs:**
 - Your child has trouble breathing, or has chest pain, or
 - A break or opening in the catheter.
- **What to do: This is an EMERGENCY.**
 - **Clamp** the catheter near the exit site.
 - **Lie your child down** on their left side with their head down.
 - **Phone an ambulance**, and go to the nearest Emergency Department.
- **How to avoid it:**
 - Always clamp the catheter before loosening or taking off the cap.

Plugged catheter

- **Signs:**
 - It is very difficult to flush the catheter.
- **What to do:**
 - **DO NOT FORCE IT.**
 - Check that the clamp is open.
 - If the clamp is open, take off the syringe.

- Call your doctor, clinic or the Emergency Department.
- **How to avoid it:**
 - Use the **turbulent flushing method** as described above when you re-heparinize your child's line.
 - After you push the right amount of heparin, clamp the line.
 - Re-heparinize the line as often as your nurse clinician or hospital nurse suggests.

Catheter comes out: EMERGENCY

- **Signs:**
 - Bleeding from the entrance or exit site.
 - Line pulled out from site.
- **What to do: This is an EMERGENCY.**
 - Press on the cut at the entrance site on the neck, AND on the exit site where the catheter was. Use 2 fingers on each place. Keep pressing for 5 minutes to stop the bleeding.
 - Tape a sterile dressing over the exit site firmly. Do this before moving your child. Keep applying pressure until the bleeding stops.
 - Go to the nearest Emergency Department.
- **How to avoid it:**
 - Make sure that the catheter is coiled under the dressing.
 - Use a clear dressing that covers the area well.

- Keep your child's catheter taped and pinned to their clothing.

Living with a CVL

Keep life as normal as you can

When you go home, try to treat your child like you normally do. To help your child feel safe with the CVL:

- Protect the CVL as much as you can, but don't overprotect your child.
- Set clear and sensible limits.
- Give your child the chance to play, take part in family life, and experience the world.

The rest of your family needs care too

When your child has a medical diagnosis and a CVL, they need extra care. This can be tiring for you, and stressful for your family. To help your family cope:

- Ask family members to be open and honest with each other. Talk about difficult feelings. This will help you to support each other.
- Have 2 or more caregivers that can do CVL care. This will let you share work, and decrease stress.

Babysitters, teachers, and others that care for your child

It is safest to tell your child's babysitter about the CVL. They should know what problems to look for, and what to do. Review this paper with your babysitter.



Leave important phone numbers in a safe place. **Show the babysitter where you keep the spare clamp and gauze.**

Before your child goes back to school or any group activities, prepare their teachers and instructors:

- Let them know about problems that can happen. Tell them what signs to look for. You can review this paper with them.
- Give them supplies to use if there is a problem. Provide sterile gauze and a spare metal clamp.
- Talk to your social worker or nurse clinician. They can arrange to have someone visit or provide information to the school and staff.

Activities

Let your child decide when they are ready for activities. You know your child, and can judge what is reasonable. Your child must avoid rough contact sports.

When your child bathes or takes a shower, cover the catheter and dressing in plastic wrap. Seal plastic wrap to the skin with waterproof tape. This will prevent the line from getting wet.

Clothing

Your child should wear a snug T-shirt over their CVL. This helps hold it in place. It also stops young children from touching or pulling on the line.

Always secure the CVL to the T-shirt. Make a tab out of tape wrapped around

your child's catheter. Then, pin the tab to the T-shirt with a safety pin. Tell people that might change your child's clothing about the pinned line. They should be careful not to pull on the line.

Supplies

Your clinic will give you a CVL supply kit. When you run low on supplies, tell your nurse. They will help you get more.

You are not alone

When you return home, doing CVL care can feel difficult or scary. You are not alone.

Nurses are here to support you. Call us if you have any questions. If you need more practice, tell your nurse clinician or clinic nurse. They will find a time to help.



Contacts:

Community Nurse: _____

Telephone: _____

Doctor: _____

Telephone: _____

Nurse Clinician or other nurse:

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 pamphlet will answer some of your questions.

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