

# MID & LONG TERM VASCULAR ACCESS

Caring for your  
smart**midline**  
catheter

PATIENT GUIDE



Value Life

# WHAT IS A SMARTMIDLINE CATHETER?

This booklet will give you information about the care of your catheter and things to look out for. For any other additional information you should contact your hospital doctor, nurse, GP or district nurse.

A smartmidline catheter is a long, thin, flexible tube. It is made of polyurethane and is inserted either into one of the large veins of the upper arm or in a vein in the lower arm. They are often thought of as long cannulas.

## Why do I need this catheter?

It has been recommended that you have a smartmidline catheter inserted because you need intravenous (IV) therapy or access for an extended period of time. This catheter can be left in place for several weeks and means that you can finish your treatment without having to have repeated catheters placed.

## How will it be inserted?

Your catheter will be put in by a specially trained nurse or doctor usually in the ward area. The person inserting your catheter will treat it as a very clean procedure although it is not an operation and your skin will not be cut. An ultrasound machine might be used to help find the most suitable vein. The catheter will be inserted using a needle and a short wire. You will not feel the catheter being threaded along the vein. Once the catheter is in position the needle and wire are removed. You may feel some minor discomfort while the catheter is being inserted. The catheter will be held in place by a securing device attached (like a plaster) to the skin and a see through dressing. It will take around 30 minutes for your catheter to be put in.

## What are the alternatives?

The alternative to a smartmidline catheter is repeated cannulation. If you have all of your treatment through a short peripheral cannula you may have to have this changed every 2 – 4 days.



## Potential problems on inserting the catheter

Usually the catheter is inserted without any problems, however occasionally there are minor problems faced:

- Difficulty or inability to insert catheter - It might be difficult to insert the catheter if you have very small veins. This might make the procedure slightly longer and the person inserting the catheter might either have to try another vein or refer you to another healthcare professional for assistance or for a different sort of catheter.
- Minor bleeding / bruising - You might experience minor bleeding or some bruising around the insertion site. This should stop after a few hours but if you have a blood clotting disorder or are on medications that thin the blood it might last longer.

## LIVING WITH YOUR SMARTMIDLINE CATHETER

- When dressing, flushing or using the catheter, hands must be washed and gloves should be worn
- The dressings and needle free device 'access port' are usually changed on a weekly basis, unless they are loose or soiled when they should be changed immediately
- You can change the dressing yourself if you have been shown how, otherwise you should contact your district nurse or return to the hospital for the dressing to be changed
- It is advised that you do not get the dressing or 'access port' wet as this is an infection risk
- You can shower with a special protective waterproof covering the catheter and access port
- If you have a bath, make sure your catheter is not placed in the bathwater unless it is covered with a special protective water proof cover
- You can move your arm normally after the catheter is inserted, but avoid doing any strenuous work
- Swimming is not recommended when you have a smartmidline in place
- When you no longer need the catheter it will be taken out. This is a painless procedure that takes only a few minutes.

# ARE THERE ANY RISKS ONCE IT IS IN PLACE?

Many patients complete their treatment without having any problems with their catheter, but there are certain risks involved and it is important that you are aware of these problems, what to look for and what to do if they occur. The person inserting your catheter will spend time discussing this with you but please read the information contained in this booklet as well.

## Vein irritation

Because the catheter sits inside the vein this can cause a little irritation especially in the first 5 days.

**What should I look out for?** The area of the insertion might be a little red the first few days after the catheter placed.

**What should I do?** If the vein with the catheter in it becomes red or painful, please inform your doctor or nurse immediately. Warm packs might be used to help with the irritation.

## Infection

Very occasionally infection can occur when you have a smartmidline catheter inserted. This may result in additional medical treatment, and possible removal of the catheter. A clean or sterile procedure should be used by anyone using or caring for your catheter.

### This includes:

- Hand washing
- Wearing gloves
- Using antiseptic swabs to clean the end of the catheter for 15 – 30 seconds before use.

### What should I look out for?

- The catheter exit site may become red and swollen. The site might be hot to touch and you might experience tenderness at the catheter exit site.
- You might get a temperature, fever, chills or feel generally unwell

**What should I do?** Contact your healthcare professional immediately.

## Blood clot

On rare occasions it is possible for a blood clot (thrombosis) to develop in your vein. Although this might sound alarming, if it occurs it is not likely to cause a serious problem. This would normally result in additional medical treatment.

**What should I look out for?** Your arm with the catheter in may become painful or swollen, you may also notice some discolouration.

**What should I do?** Please inform your healthcare professional immediately.

## Catheter movement

**What should I look out for?** The length of the visible section of your catheter will be longer

**What should I do?** Secure the catheter in place and inform your nurse. Do not use the catheter until it has been checked.

## What if my catheter falls out?

Inform your nurse immediately. Press firmly on the hole in your skin for a few minutes then apply a small sterile dressing. If it continues to bleed reapply pressure until it stops. Keep the catheter for the nurse to inspect.

## Catheter breakage

**What should I look out for?** You might see leakage from the catheter

**What should I do?** If the catheter breaks or you accidentally cut the catheter, clamp the catheter above the cut and please contact your healthcare professional. Stop any infusions that are running.

## Catheter Blocked

Sometimes your catheter may block. It may be possible to unblock your catheter but if this is not possible it will need to be removed. To help prevent this your catheter must be flushed on a regular basis and after medication has been given.

**What should I look out for?** Infusions will not run and your catheter will not be able to be flushed

**What should I do?** Contact your healthcare provider.

# HANDWASHING TECHNIQUE

A nine step handwashing technique was devised by Ayliffe et al (1978), and it is used regularly by healthcare professionals. Using it yourself may improve the care of your catheter. The technique uses soap or an antiseptic solution and running water, and each step consists of five strokes forward and five backward.



•..... **Step One**

Wet hands thoroughly before applying washing agent.



**Step Two** .....

Rub palm to palm.



•..... **Step Three**

Right palm over back of left hand and left palm over back of right hand.



**Step Four** .....

Palm to palm with fingers interlaced.



●..... **Step Five**

Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked.



**Step Six** .....

Wash each thumb by clasp and rotating in the palm of the opposite hand.



●..... **Step Seven**

Rotational rubbing back and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa.

**Step Eight** .....

Rinse hands under running water.



●..... **Step Nine**

Dry hands thoroughly.



# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

## Your smartmidline Information

Code number: \_\_\_\_\_

Length: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of insertion: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

In case of queries please contact:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Special Instructions

1. Dressing and securement device should be changed every 7 days (unless it becomes wet or falls off)
2. The needle-free device 'bung' should be changed every \_\_\_\_ days
3. Your catheter should be flushed every day and after every drug administration
4. Ensure hands are washed and gloves are worn when the catheter is accessed
5. Your own instructions:

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For further information, please contact: [info@vygon.com](mailto:info@vygon.com)

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