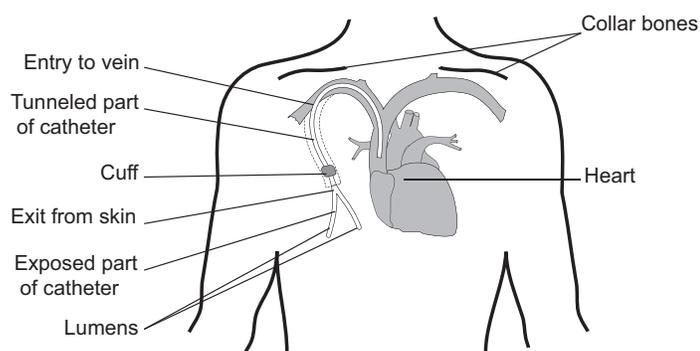


A tunneled venous catheter is a long, flexible tube that goes under the skin of your chest into a vein. The tip of the tube sits in a large vein just above the heart.

The tube may branch into two or three ends outside your skin. The branches are called lumens. Each lumen has a clamp and a cap to close it when it is not in use.

A clear bandage covers the area where the tube comes outside your skin. The bandage keeps air and water out so the area stays clean and dry. It is clear so your nurses can check for redness and infection without taking off the bandage.



Location of tunneled venous catheter

Why do I need a tunneled venous catheter?

The catheter lets your care team access your veins without needles. They use the lumens to give treatments such as antibiotics, high-calorie liquids, chemotherapy, and blood transfusions. They also use it to take blood for your lab tests.

How is my catheter put in place?

Your care team will place your catheter. First, they clean and numb the area on your chest where the catheter goes in. They make a small cut in your skin and push the tube into a large vein near your heart. Once in place, the catheter can be left in for weeks or months.

What keeps my catheter from coming out?

A cuff surrounds the catheter tube. You can feel it as a small lump under your skin. Stitches hold the tube in place until the skin around the cuff heals. Your care team will take out the stitches 7-10 days after they place your catheter.

When Should I Call My Doctor?

If you have any question about your catheter, call your care team. Call right away if you have any of these things:

- Redness, swelling, or oozing around the catheter
- A fever higher than 100.3° F
- Swollen, sore, or red area in your neck, chest, or arm
- Wet, dirty, or loose bandage
- Damaged catheter

Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Monday–Friday after 5 p.m., weekends, holidays
Call 801-587-7000. Ask for the cancer doctor.

How do I care for my catheter?

Bathing. You may shower with your catheter in place. First, cover the clear bandage and at least 2 inches more around it with plastic wrap. Tape all the edges to keep the area dry when you shower. NEVER let the catheter area get wet.

Dressing. A nurse will do the first bandage change 24-48 hours after your catheter is placed. This will happen during one of your clinic or infusion appointments. After that, your clinic or home care nurse will change the bandage every 7 days.

Flushing. Your nurses will flush the catheter with saline solution and heparin after each use or at least every 7 days when they change the bandage.

Activity. You can do most everyday activities such as going to work or school, exercise, and having sex.

- Avoid strenuous activity for 7 days after the catheter is placed to allow the cut to heal.
- Do not lift more than 10 pounds for 7 days. A laundry basket filled with towels weighs about 10 pounds.
- Avoid contact sports such as football, basketball, or lifting weights.
- Do not take a tub bath, swim, or do any other activities that may get the bandage or the area under it wet or dirty.
- Never use scissors or sharp objects near your catheter.

How is the catheter taken out?

Your care team will take out the catheter when you no longer need it. Usually, this only takes a few minutes.