

Midline

Intravenous Therapy



Patient information leaflet

What is a Midline?

This is a very fine flexible tube (up to 20cm length) inserted into a vein in your arm. The tip is in the vein just below your shoulder.

Why do I need a midline?

You may be able to go home and have intravenous (IV) treatment in the community. This would mean that you could leave hospital. If you have to stay in hospital, a midline can be used instead of a cannula (short tube). This may be helpful if your veins are difficult to find or if you need more than a few days of IV therapy.

How will the midline be inserted?

A specially trained nurse or doctor will insert your midline on the ward. Your skin may be numbed with local anaesthetic – this is done either by applying cream to the skin or injecting a small amount of local anaesthetic underneath the surface of the skin.

A cannula is carefully inserted into the vein. The inner sharp part is removed and the midline will be gently passed up the vein. To reduce the risk of infection a sterile procedure is used to insert the midline. It can take up to half an hour.

Will I feel anything as the midline is inserted?

You will feel a sting from local anaesthetic being injected, if used you may feel slight pressure as the needle is inserted into the vein and possibly some discomfort. You will not be able to feel the midline as it is passed up the vein.

How long will my midline last?

A midline can last for several weeks but will be removed as soon as your treatment is finished.

How will my midline be kept in the right place?

A sterile dressing will keep the midline in place. This will be changed by a nurse every week. Please contact your Nurse if this dressing becomes loose or wet (**do not remove the dressing yourself**).

What are the potential complications of having a midline inserted?

Having a midline inserted is a very safe procedure, however there are a few minor potential complications of insertion. (These risks are similar to those that may occur with an ordinary cannula):

- **Failure to insert the device** – this does not mean you cannot have your treatment or that there is something wrong with your veins. If this happens the nurse will probably try again using a different vein.
- **Bruising** – in most instances this will be fairly minor, report to your nurse/doctor any discomfort or swelling associated with it.
- **Phlebitis** – inflammation of the vein that the midline is in. Symptoms are redness or swelling above the site of insertion. It is caused by the body's response to a foreign material inside a vein and usually occurs during the first week. To reduce symptoms you are advised to apply gentle heat, in the form of a heat pad or hot water bottle. This should go on the area just above where the midline goes into the arm. You should do this 4 times a day for about 20 minutes for the first 2–3 days after the midline has been inserted. You can also do this at any time if you suspect phlebitis, but contact your GP if this does not resolve within 48 hours.
- **Arterial puncture** – there are arteries near to most major veins. If an artery is punctured the nurse/doctor will gently press on the area for at least 5 minutes until bleeding has stopped.
- **Infection** – there is always a risk of infection when any device is put into your vein. The symptoms are red, hot skin around the midline. If this happens, contact your Nurse or GP. Prior to insertion, you will be tested for MRSA in your nose and groin.

- **Blood Clot** – on rare occasions, a small blood clot can collect around the catheter. This would normally result in extra medical treatment. If your arm, with the midline in, becomes swollen please contact your Nurse or GP immediately.

How will the intravenous treatment be given through the line?

Your intravenous treatment will be injected through the bung on the end of your midline. You may feel a cold sensation as the injection goes into the vein but you should not feel any discomfort.

What if my midline comes out?

This is unlikely to happen. However if it does happen please:

1. Press on the arm where the midline has come out and lift your arm up. You should do this for 2–3 minutes or until the bleeding stops.
2. Contact your Nurse as soon as possible. If you cannot stop the bleeding or are worried at all, please contact your GP immediately.

How do I take good care of my midline?

DO NOT Lift or carry heavy objects, Vacuum or carry any type of bag that loops over your elbow on the arm with the midline in.

DO NOT put your midline in water (i.e. having a bath or swimming pools). Report to the Nurse if your dressing gets wet.

DO have a shower. But make sure your midline and dressing stay dry, cling film can help to keep it dry. Report to your nurse if your dressing gets wet.

DO keep it out of the way of young children and pets that may accidentally pull it out. The midline dressing may be protected by an elastic sleeve or long sleeved garment.

DO use your arm for light activities.

Removal of midline

Once your treatment is complete your line will be removed. This is a very simple process and takes only a few minutes.

Reference sources

The Royal Marsden Hospital Manual of Clinical Nursing Procedures 9th Edition Dougherty & Lister.

Contact details

In working hours:

Please contact your Nurse or GP

Out of hours:

Emergency Assessment Unit

Telephone: 01483 571122 **ext** 6721

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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