



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

What is a Midline?

Information for patients



A Midline is a narrow, hollow, flexible tube called a catheter. It is inserted into one of the veins in the upper arm. It is between 8 and 20cms long. A Midline is recommended for patients who need certain types of medicines or treatments that can irritate or damage smaller veins, who need the treatment over a longer period of time or who can continue their treatment at home.

The Midline can stay in for up to 29 days.

A specially trained practitioner called a Vascular Access Practitioner (VAP) will insert the Midline at the bedside. The VAP will examine your arm veins with an ultrasound to find the one most suitable for the Midline.

The Midline is 'power-injectable'. This means it can be used for the administration of contrast if you are having a scan in Radiology.

Risks

The VAP will discuss the benefits and risks of having a Midline inserted with you before the procedure begins. This will be your opportunity to discuss any questions or concerns you may have.

You will be required to give your written consent before having a Midline inserted.

The risks are uncommon and include:

- Bleeding.
- Infection.
- Thrombosis (blood clot around the line or on the tip of the line).
- Phlebitis (inflammation of the vein).
- Published rates of symptomatic midline-related thrombosis are between 8 to 12%.

The signs of infection, thrombosis and phlebitis are the same. It is important if you have any swelling, heat, redness or pain either at the exit site or more generally in your arm that you tell the Nurse looking after you.

All of the above complications can be easily treated but it is important to let your team know promptly.

What happens during the procedure?

The VAP uses the ultrasound to examine your veins and decides which one is the most suitable for the Midline. During the procedure – the VAP will clean the area using antiseptic solution, be wearing a sterile gown and gloves and will cover you with a large sterile drape. They will give you an injection of local anaesthetic to numb the skin. This usually stings a little for a few seconds until the area goes numb.

The VAP will then insert the Midline. You may feel a 'pushing' sensation but you should not feel any pain. The Midline will then be secured with a dressing.

The procedure should take about 30 minutes.

After the procedure

There may be some bleeding around the point at which the line enters/exits the skin (the exit site). The nurse looking after you will apply further dressings if necessary.

Living with your midline – what do you need to look out for?

If you notice that the length of tubing on the outside is increasing, please tell the nurse looking after you and ask that the Vascular Access team are contacted.

If you feel any pain, redness, swelling or change in sensation on the side the Midline has been placed you must tell your hospital nurse or doctor immediately as these are all signs of infection, thrombosis and phlebitis

Aftercare

The dressing on the line should be changed 24 hours after insertion and then weekly – or sooner if the dressing becomes loose, wet or bloodstained. This can be done in the Day Treatment Unit or Ward, or a Community Nurse can be arranged to do this for you. The nurses in your Ward will confirm who is responsible for doing these dressings.

The line should be flushed after each use to prevent it from becoming blocked. The needlefree connectors (bungs on the end of the line) should be changed every 7 days too.

Do not hesitate to remind any Health Care Practitioner who handles the line to wash their hands, wear gloves and clean the connector thoroughly before and after use. This will help prevent infection.

You are able to shower with your Midline as long as you use the waterproof bath-guard provided to prevent the dressing from becoming wet. If the bath-guard is unavailable you can use an alternative such as cling film.

Please do not submerge your Midline in water.

Activities

Please carry on with all your normal day-to-day activities. Please do not swim with your Midline in situ as there is a high risk of developing an infection.

Removing the Midline

When the course of treatment has finished, the Midline will be removed by a healthcare professional. This is done by removing the dressing and gently pulling the Midline out of your arm. This will not hurt. The area will be cleaned and a small dressing applied which can be removed after 24 hours.

How to contact us

If you have any questions or concerns or need further information please speak with the nurse or community team (i.e. OPAT, Hospital at Home or specialist team) looking after you.

For general / non urgent information about your Midline contact:

Vascular Access Department

Telephone: 01865 221 653
(9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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