

## **What You Need to Know about Central Line Infections (CLI):** *A Fact Sheet for Patients and their Family Members*

Patients who need frequent intravenous (IV) medications, blood, fluid replacement and/or nutrition may have a central venous catheter (or “line”) placed into one of their veins. This line can stay in place for days and even months.

### **Catheter-related bloodstream infections (CR-BSI):**

Lines are often very helpful. But sometimes they cause infections when bacteria grow in the line and spreads to the patient’s bloodstream. This is called a “catheter-related bloodstream infection” (CR-BSI).

### **A bundle of 5 care steps to prevent CR-BSI:**

Doctors and nurses can help prevent CR-BSI by using a bundle of 5 “care steps.” Hospitals find that when all 5 of these steps are done that there are almost no cases of CR-BSI. The bundle of care steps are:

1. Using proper hand hygiene. Everyone who touches the central line must wash their hands with soap and water or an alcohol cleanser.
2. Wearing maximal barrier precautions. The person who inserts the line should be in sterile clothing – wearing a mask, gloves, and hair covering. The patient should be fully covered with a sterile drape, except for a very small hole where the line goes in.
3. Cleaning the patient’s skin with “chlorhexidine” (a type of soap) when the line is put in.
4. Finding the best vein to insert the line. Often, this is the subclavian vein (in the chest) which is not as likely to get an infection as veins in the arm or leg.
5. Checking the line for infection each day. The line should be taken out only when no longer needed and not on a schedule.

### **How patients and family members can help:**

1. Watch the hospital staff to make sure they wash their hands before and after working with the patient. Do not be afraid to remind them to wash their hands!
2. Ask the doctors and nurses lots of questions before you agree to a line. Questions can include: Which vein will you use to put in the line? How will you clean the skin when the line goes in? What steps are you taking to lower the risk of infection?
3. Make sure the doctors and nurses check the line every day for signs of infection. They will only replace the line when needed and not on a schedule.
4. If your bandage comes off or becomes dirty, tell your nurse immediately.
5. Some patients are discharged home with a catheter to continue treatment. If you go home with a catheter, your nurse will explain what you need to know to take care of your catheter.
6. Make sure you understand how to shower with your catheter and care for your dressing at home.
7. Know who to call with questions or problems.
8. Watch for signs and symptoms of infection including: soreness or redness at the catheter site or fever.

Learn more about central line infections at the 5 Million Lives Campaign at [www.ihc.org](http://www.ihc.org).