

Central Line Placement

A central line is a tiny tube that is placed in a vein for long-term drug therapy, to readily obtain blood samples when patients are critically ill or for kidney dialysis.

A central line is necessary when you need drugs given through your veins over a long period of time, or when you need kidney dialysis. In these cases, a central line is easier and less painful than having needles put in your veins each time you need therapy.

A central line placement is performed in an X-ray room by a radiologist and specially trained nurses and technologists. The radiologist will place a small tube in the vein under your shoulder bone and anchor it by making a small tunnel under your skin. The tube will stay in place as long as you need it for dialysis or drug treatment.

Before the procedure:

- You must not to eat or drink anything after midnight the night before the study except for your normal medications. Your doctor or nurse will tell you if you should stop taking any of your medications prior to the procedure.
- You need to bring a list of all your medications with you to the hospital.
- Please tell the doctor if you think you may be pregnant.
- A nurse will place an IV in your hand or arm so that you can receive fluids and medications.
- Your doctor will answer your questions and ask you to sign a consent form.

During the procedure:

- You will lie on an x-ray table with machines all around you. You will have a blood pressure cuff on your arm, a clip on your finger to make sure you are getting enough oxygen, and wires on your legs and arms to check your heart rate.
- The nurse will give you pain medication and a sedative, which will help you relax, before the procedure. The nurse will give you more medication if needed. You will feel relaxed, but you will be awake so that you can follow instructions.
- The area where the doctor will be working will be cleaned and shaved. You will be covered with sterile drapes from your shoulders to your feet.
- You will receive a local anesthetic that will numb the area where the radiologist will be placing the central line.
- The radiologist will insert a needle into the skin, creating a small tunnel.
- The central line is then placed in the tunnel with the tip coming to rest in a large vein.
- As the radiologist places the central line through the sheath, he or she may ask you to hum. This helps prevent changes in pressure that may allow air to enter the sheath.

After the procedure:

- The nurse or technologist will place a sterile dressing over the catheter entry site.
- You will be taken to the recovery room where the nurse will monitor your blood pressure and heart rate.
- If you are an outpatient, you may leave once your recovery is completed. Someone will have to drive you home.
- You will not be able to drive for 24 hours after the procedure, but you may return to other daily activities.