

# UNDERSTANDING Intravenous Lines



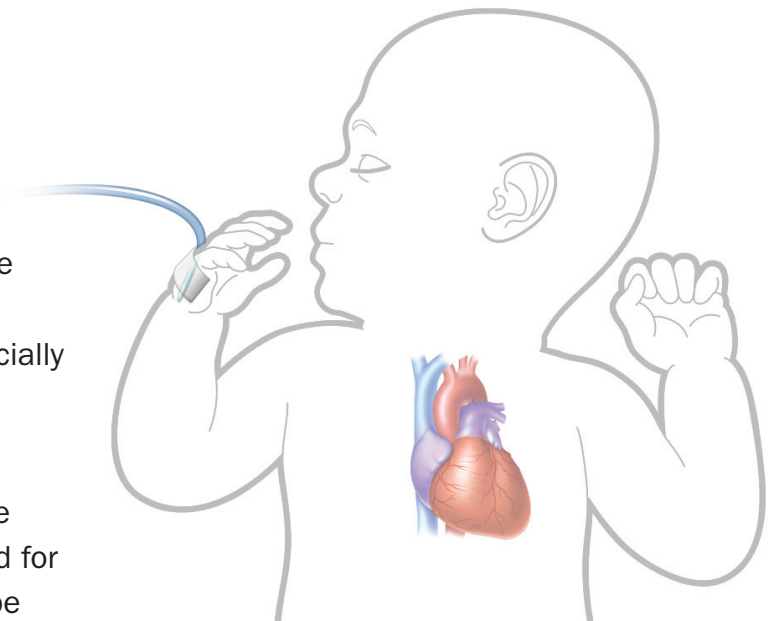
An **intravenous** (IV) line is a small tube inserted in a **vein**. The IV line allows the health care team to deliver fluids, **nutrients**, medicines, or blood to the baby as needed.

The main types of IV lines used in the NICU are **peripheral** lines and central lines. A special type of central line called a **PICC** line is very common.

## What is a peripheral IV line?

Peripheral means “on the edge”. In the NICU, peripheral IVs go into a baby’s hand, foot, arm, leg, or scalp (head). While scalp IVs may look unpleasant, they are often the easiest (and least painful) way to put in a peripheral IV. That’s because babies (especially premature babies) often don’t have large, easy-to-access veins in other places.

Peripheral IVs are very common. They are relatively easy to insert but cannot be used for more than a few days. Then they need to be removed and replaced. That means another needle stick for your baby.



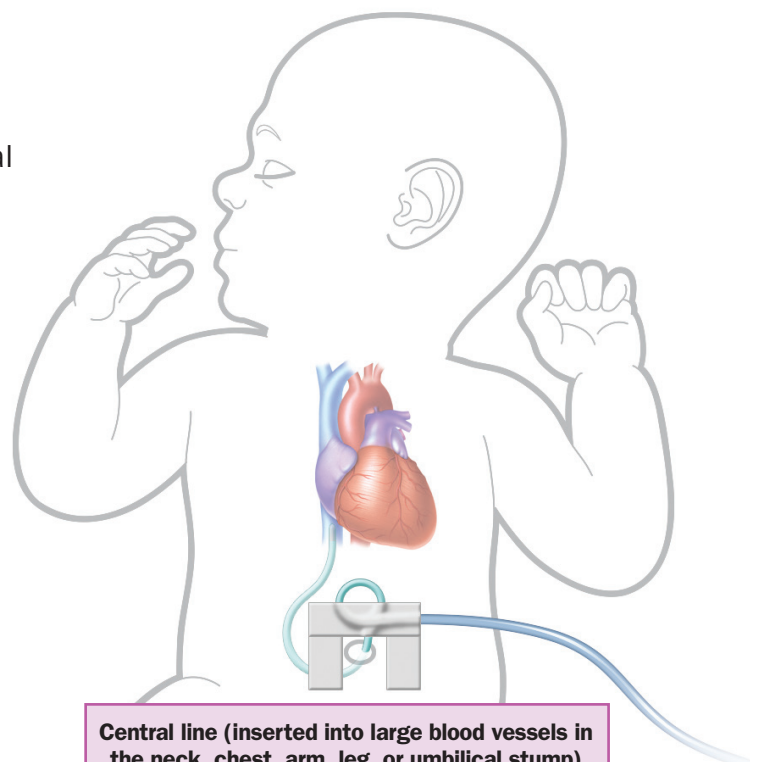
Peripheral IV line (may be in hand, foot, arm, leg, or head)

## What is a central IV line?

Central IV lines are inserted into large blood vessels in the neck, chest, arm, leg, or umbilical stump. The line extends into the body and ends near the heart.

Central IV lines are more work to insert than peripheral lines. Some need to be placed by a surgeon. After insertion, it’s common for the baby to have an X-ray to make sure the central line is in the right place. Central lines often can stay in the body for weeks. Fewer IV changes mean less discomfort for your baby.

Talk to the NICU team to learn more about the uses and risks of these types of IV lines.



Central line (inserted into large blood vessels in the neck, chest, arm, leg, or umbilical stump)

