**PICC Lines**

A PICC line is by definition, a peripherally inserted central catheter. It is a long, slender, flexible tube that is inserted into a peripheral vein, typically in the upper arm, and advanced until the catheter reaches a large vein in the chest near the heart to obtain intravenous access. It is similar to other central lines that end near the heart, except that the PICC is inserted from the outside of the body, usually in the upper arm.

A PICC line provides the best of both worlds concerning venous access. Similar to the standard IV, it is inserted in the arm, but it is placed under the benefits of ultrasound visualization in the Special Procedures area of the hospital's X-Ray department. Each PICC can have one or multiple ports (also known as “lumens”) depending on the MD’s order. Also, because of where the PICC lines end, near the heart, it allows for various treatments (delivery of more than one antibiotic, larger volumes of fluid, blood draws etc.) through one access line. In addition, PICC lines have decreased complication risks associated with them, and remain for a much longer duration than other central or standard IV access devices.

At RWJUH PICC lines are ordered by the Doctor or Nurse Practitioner once the patient is admitted to the hospital. If Anesthesia is required, the patient must be fasting (“NPO”). Speak with the Doctor or Nurse Practitioner about what is best. The PICC line will be inserted by a specially trained Doctor in the Special Procedures area of the Radiology Department on the Ground Floor of the hospital. Placement of the line will be guided by ultrasound and checked with an X-ray. The line will be secured with stitches and covered with a special dressing. The procedure usually takes about 1 hour. The PICC line can be used immediately. The nurses on the floor are trained to care for PICC lines and will change the dressing weekly. It will be removed at the end of therapy, which may be at discharge, at completion of home IV’s, or on a follow-up clinic visit. Removal takes about 15 minutes and is painless. A dry sterile dressing will be placed over the insertion site and requires no special care.

PICC lines can also be scheduled as an outpatient at RWJUH if IV therapy is to be started by a Home Care Company. This is a medical decision that is dependent on the patient’s age, condition and therapy to be prescribed.
Precautions with PICC lines:

Occasionally, a patient can develop a blood clot or infection related to the PICC line. In the event of a clot or infection, the PICC line will be removed immediately, followed by studies to include Doppler of the extremity where they picc line was located and cultures to look for infection.

Treatment for infections or blood clots will be determined by the physician.