Midline IV Catheter Patient Education

1. **What is a Midline catheter?**

   It is a thin, soft tube or catheter made of sterile, medical grade silicone rubber or polyurethane. It is inserted through a needle which is placed into a vein in your arm. This catheter provides access to your bloodstream for administering IV (intravenous) fluids, medications, blood products or nutrition.

2. **Why has it been recommended for me?**

   It is an option for use in patients who need to receive prolonged IV therapy or for those patients who have limited venous access for IV catheters. It can reduce the need for repeated venipuncture and may remain in place for several weeks so long as it is functioning properly and not causing any problem.

3. **How is the midline inserted?**

   This catheter, about eight inches in length, is placed by a specially trained nurse, using a sterile procedure, through a needle into a vein near the bend in the arm and then threaded to just under the armpit. The procedure takes about 45 minutes, and during this time you will need to lie still.

4. **What will the insertion site look like?**

   The catheter will exit a very small hole in the skin of your arm. This is the insertion site. The site must be kept clean, and for this reason a dressing is placed over it. At some point you may notice a small, red bump right where your catheter enters your arm. This is a normal body reaction, but there should be no swelling, pain or drainage.

5. **What kind of care is needed for the catheter insertion site?**

   Immediately after insertion of your line, a temporary gauze dressing is placed over the site. A small amount of bleeding may be expected from your site for the first 24 hours, and this dressing will be changed the following day by your nurse. After that, your nurse will change the dressing weekly or as needed for soilage or loosening. Should your dressing become saturated with blood, please notify your nurse. It is important to keep your catheter site clean and dry.

6. **How will my catheter be cared for?**

   Your insertion site requires very little care. Your nurse will come out to see you at least once a week
for routine dressing change and inspection of your site. Meanwhile, you will be responsible for checking your site daily for any sign of swelling, redness, drainage or tenderness. Call your nurse if you notice any of these signs.
7. **What other care is required for the catheter?**

The catheter needs to be flushed before and after medication or IV fluid administration. The flush is performed by connecting a syringe to the injection cap attached to the end of your catheter. Typically, the catheter is flushed with sterile normal saline. If the catheter is not going to be used for awhile, it is then flushed with a small amount of heparin to prevent any blood inside your catheter from clotting it off. The flush is painless and very easy to do.

8. **Are there possible risks associated with insertion and use of this catheter?**

During the insertion and use of the catheter there are certain risks. These risks include:
- inability to insert or thread the catheter, in which case an alternative site or plan will be discussed
- catheter embolism, which occurs when a piece of the catheter becomes detached and is loose in the bloodstream
- air embolism, when air enters the catheter and subsequently the bloodstream
- arterial puncture

Catheter and air embolisms can cause breathing and heart problems, and puncture of an artery can cause bleeding, either external or internal. Incidence of these complications is rare, and your nurse will take all appropriate measures to reduce or eliminate the chances of them occurring.

Other complications that could develop once the catheter has been placed may include:
- phlebitis (inflammation of the vein)
- infiltration (leakage of IV fluid outside of the vein leading to swelling)
- insertion site infection
- cellulitis (infection of the skin)
- bloodstream infection

These potential risks are generally well managed in the way we care for your insertion site and catheter. Let your nurse know right away if you notice that your arm or insertion site is tender, swollen or red or feels unusual in any other way. Also let your nurse know if your insertion site dressing comes loose or you notice any unusual smell under the dressing.

9. **Will I have to restrict my activities?**

Your activity limitations should be minimal. You should not do any throwing or heavy lifting with the catheterized arm. You should keep the catheter and insertion site dry when bathing. (Your nurse can provide you with strategies for this). You should also avoid having blood pressure readings taken from the catheterized arm.

And finally, you should avoid any activity which may put a strain on your insertion site or may put your catheter at risk for being pulled out. If your catheter is accidentally pulled out, place a clean gauze dressing over the site with pressure and let your nurse know.

10. **In case of emergency, who should I contact?**

Be sure to have the phone number of the nursing agency with you, and call the agency to speak with a nurse any time you have a question or concern. If you are away from home and have an emergency, go to the nearest hospital emergency room.

Nursing Agency Phone Number ____________________________