Your healthcare provider has elected to place a vascular access device (VAD) as part of your treatment. A VAD is required when blood, fluid replacement and/or medications need to be given directly into the bloodstream. This fact sheet is intended to help you identify infections related to your VAD and explain ways in which to prevent such infections.

What is a Catheter-Associated Bloodstream Infection (CA-BSI)?

A Catheter-Associated Bloodstream Infection, or “CA-BSI”, is a bloodstream infection that can be attributed to contamination of a VAD when bacteria grow in or around the catheter.

What are common symptoms?

If you notice any of the following, contact your healthcare provider:
• Redness, pain or swelling at or near the catheter site
• Pain or tenderness along the path of the catheter
• Drainage from the skin around the catheter
• Sudden fever or chills

What should your healthcare provider do to help prevent CA-BSI?

Your healthcare provider should take several steps to help prevent CA-BSI. Please ensure that the following precautions are taken:
• Your healthcare provider should practice proper hand washing techniques. Everyone who touches the VAD must wash their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
• Your healthcare provider should wear sterile gloves when placing the VAD.
• Your healthcare provider should clean your skin with a special type of disinfectant called ‘chlorhexidine’ before placing the VAD.
• Your healthcare provider should check the line frequently for infection.
• If your dressing (bandage) around the VAD becomes damp, loose or dirty, your healthcare provider should change it immediately.
• Prior to putting anything into the end of your VAD, your caregiver should scrub the hub (the end of the tube) with 70% isopropyl alcohol.

What should you do to help prevent CA-BSI?

In order to help prevent CA-BSI, you should take the following precautions:
• Wash your hands often, especially after using the bathroom, coughing, sneezing, visiting someone who is sick, or touching food. Add soap and rub your hands together, making a soapy lather, for at least 20 seconds before rinsing in warm water. Wash the front and back of your hands as well as between your fingers and under your nails. Dry with a clean towel.
• Try not to touch your VAD or the dressing around the VAD unless instructed to do so.
• Avoid getting the dressing wet or dirty.
• If you have any concerns or questions, do not hesitate to ask your healthcare provider.

How is a CA-BSI managed?

If your VAD becomes infected, your healthcare provider will discuss treatment options, including:
• Antibiotics to fight the infections
• Catheter replacement depending on your therapy
• Catheter removal

This fact sheet is for information purposes only. It is not meant to take place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a healthcare professional about any health questions or concerns you have.