

Central-Line Associated Bloodstream Infections Fact Sheet

1. **What is a Central-Line Associated Blood Stream Infection (CLABSI)?** – A bloodstream infection occurs when bacteria or other organisms enter the blood. In healthcare, these infections are often associated with central lines. Patients with central lines are at increased risk for blood stream infections because the presence of the catheter serves as an entry point for organisms outside the body to enter the bloodstream, which can cause local or widespread infections with potential for serious complications.
2. **Health Impact:** CLABSIs are among the most serious and costly of all healthcare-associated infections (HAIs). They result in excess illness and fatalities, increased hospital stays, and high costs. All CLABSIs are reportable in Pennsylvania through the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) operated by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
3. **What is a central line?** – A central line, or central venous catheter, is an IV tube that is placed in a large vein in the neck, chest, groin, or arm to deliver fluids or medications. These long, flexible catheters empty out in or near the heart and are important ways for treating or monitoring many conditions.
4. **How common are CLABSIs?** – CLABSIs are one of the top five HAIs in Pennsylvania, accounting for 6.8% of all reported HAIs in 2011.
http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/healthcare_associated_infections/14234
5. **What are the symptoms of a CLABSI?** – Fever or chills; soreness or redness around the catheter site. Severe infections can result in septic shock (collapse of blood pressure due to infection), organ damage or failure, abnormal blood clotting (a condition known as disseminated intravascular coagulation – or DIC), and death.
6. **What can I do to prevent a CLABSI?** – Ask your doctors and nurses to explain why you need a central-line and how long you will have it. Sterile technique during the insertion, handling, or maintenance of a central line catheter is one of the most important ways to prevent CLABSI. Doctors and nurses should always clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub, wear sterile, protective gear, and clean a patient’s skin with an antiseptic cleanser before putting in a catheter. Healthcare workers should also clean their hands and wear gloves before handling a catheter opening or changing a bandage covering the catheter area. If you see a healthcare worker not following these precautions on yourself or a loved-one, say something. Additionally, tell your healthcare provider if a bandage comes off or becomes wet or dirty, or if the area around your catheter is sore or red. Do not let family and friends touch the catheter or the tubing, and make sure they also perform hand hygiene.

7. **How are CLABSIs diagnosed?** Blood samples are collected to look for the presence of pathogens (germs). The samples are usually collected directly from the central line.
8. **Are CLABSIs treatable?** – CLABSIs are serious infections, but can often be treated with antibiotics. The specific type(s) and duration of antibiotic therapy depends on the pathogen that is causing the infection. Other types of medications are often used to treat the complications.
9. **For more information about Central-Line Associated Blood Stream Infections:**
http://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/bsi/BSI_tagged.pdf
<http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/bsi/bsi.html>

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician for specific clinical information related to you.