Arterial Line Placement

An arterial or "art-line" is a tube (catheter) placed in an artery for blood pressure monitoring. An artery is a blood vessel where you can feel your pulse. Art-lines are placed in an artery in the wrist, arm, or groin.

An art-line is used to:

- **Constantly monitor blood pressure:** The art line connects to a monitor that shows a wave and numbers. This lets your care team check your blood pressure all the time.
- **Draw blood samples:** The art line lets your care team take blood to help check for oxygen and carbon dioxide levels in your blood. They also show how well you breathe. This test is called an arterial blood gas.

Risks

Some of the risks include:

- **Pain:** the provider will use local numbing medicine to limit pain when the art-line is placed. You may still feel a poke as the doctor inserts the needle. After placement, the needle is removed and only a tube (catheter) is left in place.

- **Infection:** Any tube that enters the body can make it easier for bacteria from the skin to get into the bloodstream. We follow a strict sterile procedure when inserting the art-line to decrease the risk of infection. The nurse will also monitor for signs of infection such as redness, tenderness or swelling.

Common Questions

How long will the catheter stay in?

This varies. It will stay in as long as it is needed.

Can I move around with catheter in?

Yes, but be careful. The art-line is often sutured in but could be tugged on and pulled out by accident. Please ask for help when getting out of bed.

Can the catheter be used to give medicine like an IV?

No. The art-line will connect to fluid which drips in very slowly to prevent the tube from clotting. We cannot give medicine in an art-line because it is not good for the artery, and it could cause tissue damage.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 5/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6344