

Removing the arterial line

Site surveillance

What is an arterial line ?

An arterial line is a small catheter that is inserted by a respiratory therapist or anesthesiologist into an artery, usually in the wrist. It is a fairly simple procedure. It is usually inserted to allow continuous monitoring of your blood pressure and/or for frequent blood samples. This line will be removed by the nurse in the recovery room before you are transferred to the day surgery unit or the care unit.

Once the arterial line is removed:

- Avoid rapid and/or jerky movements of the affected limb for at least 1 hour following removal of the arterial line.
- Avoid hyperextension and any activity that places stress or strain on the affected limb for at least 24 hours.
- Do not lift anything weighing more than 10 lbs (4.5 kg) for the next 24 hours following the removal of the line.
- You can elevate your affected limb with a pillow to prevent swelling.

What to do with the dressing:

- The dressing at the site can be removed the next day and left open to air
- A small amount of bruising at the site is normal
- A small amount of dried blood on the dressing and at the insertion site is normal.

If bleeding occurs:

- Sit down immediately and press firmly with your fingers using a gauze on the insertion site for 10 minutes. If bleeding stops, rest and keep the affected limb immobile for 1 hour.

Monitoring:

- After the line is removed, you must monitor the site every hour for 6 hours. Go to the emergency room if any of the following problems occur:
 - A growing lump or skin that remains red and warm around the site
 - Active bleeding that does not stop
 - Worsening numbness in the affected limb
 - Intense pain at the insertion site