You’re flushing, but are you checking for a positive blood return?

Always aspirate for a positive blood return prior to administering medications and solutions

“Central vascular access devices (CVADs) [should be] regularly assessed for patency and proper function as defined by the ability to flush the catheter without resistance and the ability to yield a blood return.”
—INS Infusion Therapy Standards of Practice, 2016, page S104, standard 48.1

“During the initial flush, slowly aspirate the VAD for blood return that is the color and consistency of whole blood, which is an important component of assessing catheter function prior to administration of medications and solutions.”
—INS Infusion Therapy Standards of Practice, 2016, page S77, standard 40, practice criterion D1

“Ensure brisk blood return. Ensure consistent verification of blood return prior to, during, and after infusion.”
—ONS Access Device Standards of Practice, 2017, page 94, standard H3, b

Promptly addressing catheter occlusion is a goal of catheter management

“The ability to...salvage a dysfunctional CVC is critical in minimizing delays in therapies and avoiding catheter replacement. Unnecessary CVC replacements decreases the number of sites available for future venous access and subjects the patient to additional painful, invasive procedures.”
Are you documenting patency?

Key societies recommend documenting catheter patency

“Documentation includes, but is not limited to: results of CVAD functionality assessment including patency, absence of signs and symptoms of complications, lack of resistance when flushing, and presence of a blood return upon aspiration.”

—INS Infusion Therapy Standards of Practice, 2016, page S29, standard 10, practice criterion A10

Documentation includes presence of blood return.


Documentation should indicate whether patency was confirmed prior to administration of medications and solutions

Patency is confirmed when the line:

- Flashes easily, without resistance
- Aspirates easily, with brisk, free-flowing blood return