

## How do I look after my access after insertion?

You should take some steps in caring for your access area after your procedure.

1. Initially keep your arm elevated to reduce pain and swelling.
2. Keep area clean and dry – no soaking for the first 2 days.
3. Use area for dialysis access only.
4. No blood pressure readings are to be taken on that arm.
5. No jewelry or tight clothing in that area.
6. No sleeping with access arm under your head or body.
7. Minimize lifting heavy objects.
8. Check the pulse or “thrill” frequently. Be sure that your doctor shows you how to do this.
9. Start squeezing a rubber ball. Your doctor will tell you when it is safe to do so. This will help develop your fistula. Some pain and edema is common, but if the pain is not decreasing, and there is any bleeding, drainage and temperatures over 101, these must be reported immediately.

Initial numbness and coolness in the hand goes away in a few weeks, as your circulation compensates. However, if it becomes severe or doesn't diminish, call your doctor immediately. This may be a condition called “steal syndrome” where the fistula is causing too much blood to flow AWAY from the hand.

## Tips for Everyday Care of Your Catheter

- Ask your dialysis care team to teach you how to prevent infections and keep your catheter working well. Be sure your catheter has a clean, dry dressing during and after every dialysis.
- Ensure your nurse or technician checks your catheter for signs of infection at every dialysis.
- You must wear a surgical mask when you are being connected to or disconnected from the dialysis machine.
- Make sure your nurse or technician wears a surgical mask, face shield and clean gloves when working near your catheter.
- Use a protective cover for your catheter to take a shower. Ask your dialysis care team how to obtain one of these covers.
- Ask your nurse or technician to teach you or your family how to change the dressing.
- Keep extra dressing supplies at home in case you need to replace your dressing.
- Call your dialysis care team right away if your catheter cuff is showing.
- Call your dialysis access team right away if you do not feel a thrill on your AV graft

## Is there a role for Doppler Ultrasound assessment?

Doppler Ultrasound (Duplex Scan) can be used pre-operatively to assess the suitability of your veins and arteries for a fistula or graft. Duplex scanning is very important post-operatively to detect early clots or narrowing (stenosis) in the fistula. Scans should be done at regular intervals. This is called **Access Surveillance**. Remember, it is always better to fix a failing than a failed access.



## DIALYSIS ACCESS FOR PATIENTS WITH RENAL (KIDNEY) DISEASE



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## Kidney Disease

Healthy kidneys filter and clean your blood of toxins and remove extra fluid in the form of urine. They control blood pressure and make substances that keep your body healthy.

The 2 most common causes of renal disease are high blood pressure and diabetes. Several others include hardening of the arteries causing occlusion or blockage to the kidney, infections or immune diseases.

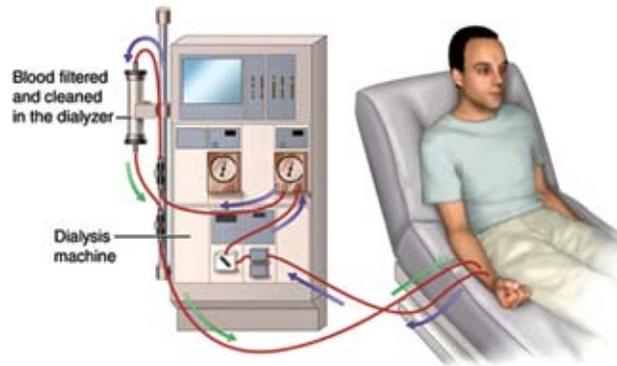
When the kidneys no longer support functions the body requires, dialysis can be used to remove waste and excess fluid from the body.

There are two different types of dialysis - hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis.

## Q&A

### What is Hemodialysis?

In hemodialysis, your blood is passed through the special filter of the dialysis machine (artificial kidney). To get your blood into the dialyzer, the doctor needs to make an access, or entrance, into your blood vessels.

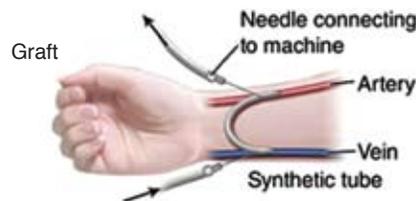


### What are the different types of Hemodialysis?

Three different types of hemodialysis are available.

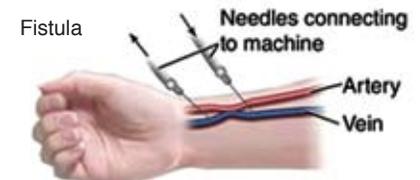
#### Graft

This is a man-made tube, usually plastic, that your surgeon inserts under the skin to connect your artery and vein. When your vein is blocked or small, grafts provide good alternatives. Grafts mature quicker but usually last 1-2 years. There is an increased risk of infection and clotting (thrombosis).



#### Fistula

Your vascular surgeon constructs this by joining your artery to your vein. It is preferred because it usually lasts longer and has fewer problems like clotting and infections. A fistula should be placed several months before you need to start dialysis. This allows the fistula enough time to be ready (mature) when you need treatment. Minor surgery is needed to create a fistula. It is made by connecting a vein to a nearby artery, usually in your arm. This creates a large blood vessel that has a fast flow of blood. Your wrist or elbow is the preferred location for your fistula. A fistula will usually last for many years. A fistula usually takes one to four months to "mature" or enlarge before it can be used.



#### Catheters

Most often used for a temporary access. For example, they are sometimes used for a short time in people who get a fistula and need to start dialysis before the fistula is ready. Once the fistula is "mature," the catheter is removed. Sometimes a permanent catheter or "permacath" is used when a fistula or graft is not possible. Catheters are made of soft plastic tubing. There are two parts, one for removing your blood and the other for returning the cleaned blood to your body. They are put in a large vein, usually in your neck or upper chest. Catheters have more problems (like clotting and infections) than fistulas or grafts.

