

# How to.....

## Care For Your Fistula After Surgery

You now have what is called an A-V fistula placed in your arm. One of your veins has been connected to an artery that allows the blood from your artery to flow into the veins near the surface of your skin. We hope that the vein will become enlarged enough to use for dialysis. The bigger the vein becomes, the easier it will be to remove the large amounts of blood from you that need to be cleansed of waste products. You will hear the dialysis staff and doctors sometimes refer to your fistula as an "access." In order for the fistula to heal and develop as it should, we need your help!

**Your assignment is to:**



**Look. . . .**

- You will have a small scar (usually in your wrist or elbow area) with stitches that will need to be removed in about 10 days. Please make a follow-up appointment to have this done.
- A small amount of bleeding from your incision for a day or two is normal. If it continues for longer, or is so much that a large bandage will not absorb it, you should call your surgeon.



**Feel. . . . .**

- Over the next few days you may have a small amount of pain and swelling in the area of your fistula. It should go away within a few days. A pain pill will usually be prescribed for this discomfort.
- Check your fistula for a "THRILL," four times each day. No, not because it's thrilling to check your arm! A "THRILL" is a buzzing sensation felt over your fistula. It indicates that there is good blood flow through your access. Have your nurse show you how to do this before you go home.

**For pain**

You can take \_\_\_\_\_

**For arm swelling**

Elevate your access arm on two pillows so that your arm is at, or above, the level of your shoulder.

**"The thrill is gone"**

If you can no longer feel the buzzing in your arm, it might mean that the fistula has clotted. Call your surgeon immediately at \_\_\_\_\_

(continued)



# About your Fistula

You can remove your bandage  on \_\_\_\_\_

Bathing Instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

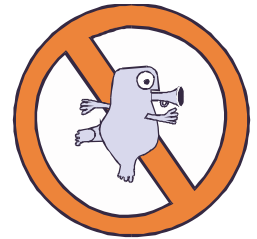


Your appointment to have your stitches removed is on \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_




## General Precautions

Your goal is to avoid activities that might decrease the blood flow through or damage your new fistula. So. . . .

- No tight clothing on your access arm
- Don't wear your watch or carry your purse on your access arm
- Don't allow anyone to take a blood pressure or put IV's on your access side
- No blood draws on your access arm (unless it's done by dialysis people)
- Don't lift heavy objects like grocery bags or sleep on your access arm
- Keep it clean; scratching it is off-limits
- If you have bleeding from your access after dialysis or from an accidental cut, put pressure directly over the cut and go to the emergency room



## More Precautions

- Avoid low blood pressures during dialysis
- Call  the doctor if you notice redness, swelling, drainage or numbness in the area of your stitches, if your access feels warm to the touch or you have a temperature over 100°.
- Call  the doctor if the thrill changes or is missing
- Call  for increasing pain, coldness or a skin tone change on the access limb

The people to contact, if you have questions or worries about your new access are:

Your surgeon: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Your kidney specialist: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Your nurse: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_