

Kidney *Chronicles*

ESRD NETWORK OF THE OHIO RIVER VALLEY

JUNE 2017

HELPFUL TIPS
TO EMPOWER
ESRD PATIENTS
AS CONSUMERS



Improving Healthcare
for the Common Good®

Vascular Access: Fistula First

Frequently asked questions regarding fistulas:

Q: What is a fistula?

A: A fistula or arteriovenous fistula (AVF) is a type of vascular access that surgically connects an artery and a vein, typically in your arm. Fistulas are recognized by as the preferred type of vascular access.

Q: Why is a fistula considered to be the best vascular access option?

A: The National Kidney Foundation (NKF), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and the Dialysis Patient Citizens (DPC) all agree that fistulas are the best vascular access option. Compared with the other types of access, fistulas are associated with:

- Lower risk of infection
- Lower risk of blood clots
- Increased blood flow
- Reduced treatment time
- Longer life
- Being less expensive to maintain

Q: How do I get a fistula?

A: If you are interested in having a fistula, make sure to ask your healthcare team to see if you are an eligible candidate for this type of vascular access.

Q: Once I have received my fistula, how long does it take for it to be ready for dialysis?

A: A fistula usually needs six to eight weeks for a fistula to heal and “mature” before it can be used for dialysis. To reduce this time period, talk with your doctor about ways to speed up the healing and maturing process.

How the Network Serves You

- Advocates on your behalf;
- Answers your questions about treatment, modality choices or other issues;
- Develops and provides educational materials, i.e., newsletters, for you and your family;
- Works with renal professionals to improve the care provided to you;
- Helps keep you informed and updated to support your involvement in your care and treatment options; and
- Evaluates and resolves grievances.

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Are you interested in learning more about fistulas?

Be sure to check out the Fresenius Medical Care's (FMC) Kidney School website:
<http://kidneyschool.org/pdfs/KSModule8.pdf>

Taking Care of Your Fistula: A Guide for Dialysis Patients

In order to ensure that your fistula lasts a long time and that it does not cause further health problems, you should consider the following recommendations:

1. Exercise after your fistula surgery

It may take months for your AV fistula to mature, however, if you exercise you will be able to strengthen your access and be able to use your fistula sooner rather than later. Before exercising, make sure to talk with your doctor.

2. Keep your fistula clean

Although fistulas are less likely to become infected than other vascular access types, it is essential that your fistula remains clean at all times. To do so, you should thoroughly wash your fistula before and after your treatments. Contact your doctor immediately if you experience a fever, redness, swelling, or pain in the fistula area.

3. Maintain a proper blood flow

In order to reduce the risk of blood clots and to ensure that blood flows smoothly through your

fistula, make sure to not add extra pressure to the area. This may include not wearing tight clothes, jewelry, being conscious of sleeping positions, and using your non-fistula arm to take your blood pressure.

4. Check your fistula blood flow. Feel the "Thrill," and Listen for the "Bruit."

It is important to check the blood flow of your fistula daily in order to ensure that your vascular access is working properly. To do so, place your fingers over your fistula and feel the thrill (the motion of the blood flowing through). Or, you can take a stethoscope and place it on top of your fistula to listen to the bruit (the blood flow).

5. Monitor your Vascular Access

Use the one minute access check:

LOOK



LISTEN



FEEL



To learn more about this monitoring process, visit:

<http://fistulafirst.esrdncc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Complete-Staff-Catheter-Check-Guide.pdf>

To file a grievance, please contact:

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