



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

**Vascular Dialysis Access
Discharge Instructions
Grafts/Fistulas**

Activity:

- Some swelling in the arm or leg that the graft/fistula was placed is normal. When sleeping or resting, raise your arm or leg on two (2) pillows, above the level of your heart.
- Use your graft/fistula arm as usual during the day. You may want to do arm exercises to help decrease the stiffness in your arm.
- Never carry purses, shopping bags or objects weighing more than five (5) pounds with your fistula/graft arm to avoid blocking the blood flow in your graft/fistula.
- Exercising the hand by squeezing a fist-sized rubber ball fifty (50) times, three times daily, is recommended to increase blood flow and the muscle strength in your arm.
- Never wear tight clothes, rings, wristwatches, or bracelets over your graft/fistula.
- Never sleep on your graft/fistula arm because doing so may block the blood flow.
- Avoid keeping the arm or leg in a tightly bent position for long periods of time.
- Never have your blood pressure checked, blood drawn or an IV started in your graft/fistula arm.

Incision Care:

- Keep the dressing clean and dry. You may remove the dressing and take a shower two (2) days after your procedure. You should not soak in a tub until the incision is healed.
- You may have steri-strips on your incision. These will loosen with daily washing and eventually fall off.
- Wash incisions gently with mild soap and water daily.
- A dry dressing may be put on to protect the wound and for comfort. If you have a dressing, do not wrap tape all the way around the limb as this could block blood flow.

What to check:

- A thrill should be felt over the graft/fistula site. A thrill feels like a buzzing or vibration under your skin. This thrill means that the graft/fistula is working. You should feel a thrill several times during the day.

Pain:

- If your doctor prescribes pain medication, take as directed.
- If pain medication was not prescribed, your doctor will recommend an over the counter pain medicine.
- Do not drink alcohol or operate heavy machinery when taking pain medicines.

Call the Doctor if:

- You start bleeding from the graft/fistula. **If this happens, hold pressure directly over the bleeding area. If you are unable to control the bleeding by holding pressure or if the bleeding increases, call 911.**
- You are unable to feel a “thrill” or vibration over the graft/fistula.
- You have coldness, numbness, aching, tingling, or weakness of the hand or foot that you have not noticed before.
- You develop a fever or chills.
- Your graft/fistula incision becomes red, warm, tender or begins to drain.
- You have significant swelling in the arm or leg that the graft /fistula was placed.

Follow-Up Visit:

Please call your surgeon’s office at 464-1800 for a follow-up appointment in 10 to 14 days.

Speak Up If You Have Any Questions or Concerns