

Caring for your Fistula / Graft

A guide for patients and carers

Renal Unit

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water and dry thoroughly. Use hand gel, if provided, in care facilities.
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting stay at home and do not visit relatives that are vulnerable in hospital or in residential care. You will spread the illness.
- Keep the environment clean and safe. Let's work together to keep it that way. Prevention is better than cure.

Introduction

Now that you have had your fistula or graft formed it is important that you play a part in its development and care. This leaflet tells you how to do this. Please read it carefully and if you have any questions please ask your nurse who will be able to help you.

Throughout the leaflet we do refer to fistula. The care is generally the same. If there are special care instructions for a graft we will refer to a graft specifically.

How do I care for my Fistula?

Do's

- Exercise your fistula arm frequently throughout the day either by squeezing a ball or clenching and relaxing your fist. This will help to enlarge the vein ready for needle insertion by encouraging blood flow through it.
- Check your fistula 'buzz' at least three times throughout the day, especially first thing in the morning (the Nurse will show you how to do this). If you cannot feel the buzzing sensation or you do not think it is as good as usual you should contact the hospital immediately (The contact numbers are at the end of this leaflet).
- If you have a graft you may not be able to feel a buzz. Your nurse may provide you with a stethoscope and teach you how to use it so that you can hear the blood flow through your graft. You will be able to report any changes in how the blood flow sounds.
- Check your fistula for signs of infection, for example: redness, swelling, discharge, and pain / discomfort. If you experience any of these contact the hospital immediately via the Renal Unit during opening hours or the Renal Ward C24. If you feel unwell / shivering, there is prolonged excessive pain, excessive bleeding or pus please telephone 999.
- Keep your fistula warm and avoid extremes of temperature. You may notice changes in sensation to your hand on the same arm as your fistula, this is normal but if it becomes severe or your hand goes white then please contact the hospital asap.

- Allow and encourage the Nurses to use the whole of the fistula vein for inserting the dialysis needles rather than just one or two areas as this helps it to last longer and prevent lumps forming.
- Keep your fistula area clean. Avoid the use of creams on your fistula other than those prescribed for you by a doctor.

Dont's

- Check your blood pressure on your fistula arm or let anybody else do so even if it is a doctor or nurse.
- Allow anyone to take blood from or put a drip into your fistula arm even if it is a doctor or nurse. You will be provided with a red band to wear on the wrist of your fistula arm to reinforce this if you wish to wear one.
- Lift or carry heavy objects with your fistula arm, especially for the first three months.
- You are advised not to drive for the first seven days after your fistula formation/graft insertion.
- Lie or sleep on your fistula arm.
- Constrict your fistula arm - for example:
 - Wear tight sleeves.
 - Watches / Bangles.
 - Tight Jewellery.
 - Sweatbands.
 - Bandages.
 - Tubigrip.
 - Handbag or shopping carried over the wrist.

All the above could stop the blood flow through your fistula.

- To help with your fistula development a special machine called a Far Infrared device will be placed over your fistula if you are already attending for haemodialysis. This machine warms your fistula for a 40 minute period; this encourages blood flow through the fistula. It is not painful and there are no reported side effects from this treatment. If you wish to know further information on this please ask your nurse.

What if my Fistula starts to bleed at home?

If your fistula starts to bleed put pressure on it using some clean gauze, keep the pressure on for five minutes before checking if it has stopped. If it continues to bleed after 15 minutes contact the hospital.

If it bleeds excessively apply direct pressure (a rigid bottle top pressed over the site may help, avoid the use of towels or tourniquets), elevate the arm and telephone 999

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the renal nurses that usually look after you on the renal unit or the renal unit advanced nurse practitioner/ access nurse

Contact Numbers

The Haemodialysis Unit	01902 694010 or 01902 695010
Renal Nurse Consultant	01902 307999 ext 6136
The Chronic Kidney Disease Team	01902 695466
The Home Therapies Team	01902 695011
Renal Wards C24 / C25	01902 695015/6

Other Information sources

www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk

www.renalpatients.co.uk

www.kidney.org

www.kidneyresearchuk.org

BRS Vascular Access Special Interest Group

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowałiby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。