

Dialysis Unit

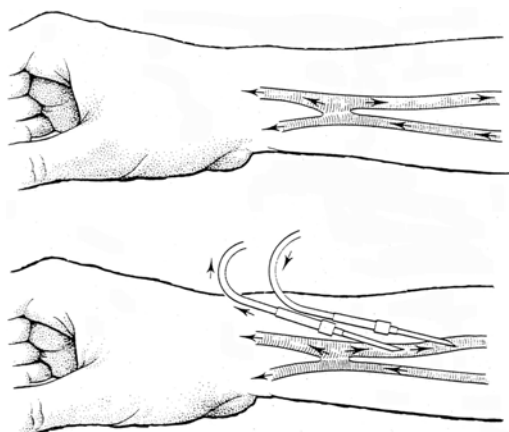
Getting to know your fistula – a patient's guide

What is a fistula?

A fistula is formed by joining a vein and artery together as we have to be able to access the circulation to enable us to carry out your haemodialysis treatment. The fistula is usually created at the wrist or elbow in your non-dominant arm, that is, if you are right-handed then it will be created in your left arm.

How is a fistula formed?

The fistula is formed under either a general or local anaesthetic in the operating theatre, in day surgery or while you are an inpatient.



It involves a small incision usually near the wrist, and an artery and a vein are connected.

The blood from the artery is now able to flow into the vein it has been connected to. This encourages the vein to enlarge and enables the dialysis nurse to insert needles easily.

The blood flowing through your newly created fistula will cause a buzzing sensation near the incision site. **This is expected and shows that the fistula is working.**

You may well experience some bruising or swelling for up to ten days after the operation.

Once your fistula has been created it will take about six weeks until it is ready to be used. If you need to dialyse before the fistula is ready there are alternatives that can be used, these will be explained if necessary.

How do I care for my fistula?

Care of your fistula is important and we suggest that you follow these easy steps.

Do

- Exercise your fistula arm frequently throughout the day either by squeezing a ball or clenching and relaxing your fist. This will also help to enlarge the vein for easier needle insertion.
- Check your fistula 'buzz' at least three times a day, especially first thing in the morning. If you cannot feel the buzzing sensation you should contact the hospital immediately.
- Check your fistula for signs of infection, for example: redness, swelling, discharge, pain/discomfort. Should you experience any of the above contact the hospital immediately.

Don't

- Allow blood pressures or injections to be taken or given on your fistula arm
- Allow blood samples to be taken from your fistula arm
- Constrict your fistula arm for example:
 - Tight sleeves
 - Watches
 - Tight jewellery
 - Sweatbands
 - Bandages
 - Tubigrip
 - Handbag/shopping carried over the wrist
- Lift heavy objects using your fistula arm
- Sleep on your fistula arm

If you have any questions or concerns please contact:

Dialysis Unit

01223 274610

Please note we are only open between the hours of 7 am and 11pm Monday - Saturday

Ward C5 01223 217195

Ward C9 01223 217306

This document is also available in other languages, large print and audio format upon request – 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

本文件也可應要求，製作成其他語文或特大字體版本，也可製作成錄音帶。

Cantonese

આ દસ્તાવેજ વિનંતી કરવાથી બીજી ભાષાઓ, મોટા છાપેલા અક્ષરો અથવા ઓડિઓ રચનામાં પણ મળી રહેશે.

Gujarati

A richiesta questo documento è anche disponibile in altre lingue, a caratteri grandi e in formato audio.

Italian

ئەم بەلگەییە ھەرۆھەا بە زمانەکانی کە، بە چاچی درشت و بە شریتی تەسجیل دەس دەکەویت

Kurdish

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔

Urdu



Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. Please do not smoke anywhere on the site.

For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free, 0800 169 0 169

Document History

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Contact number	01223 217827
Published	May 2006
Review date	May 2008
File name	fistula.doc
Version number	1
Ref	PIN169