



# Vascular Access for Hemodialysis

TGH

## A guide for after your vascular access surgery

### Going Home

- You will go home on the same day as your surgery.
- Please have someone pick you up & stay with you for the night.
- If this is not possible please call the Vascular Access Co-ordinator before your surgery date.

### Taking Care of Your Vascular Access

1. After surgery, you will have a bandage on your arm. Keep it dry for 48 hours after your surgery.
2. After 48 hours, you may remove the bandage and wash the area with mild soap and water. Gently pat this area dry with a towel. If there are small white tapes under the bandage leave them in place for one week or until they fall off.
3. After you take your bandage off, your incision may ooze clear fluid. If this happens, you may cover them with clean dry gauze. Please change this gauze every day.
4. Your surgeon will use clear tape, staples or dissolvable sutures (stitches) to close your incision (cut made during surgery).

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Author: Cynthia Bhola

Created: 06/2005

Form: D-5135

<b>If you have:</b>	<b>Do this:</b>
Clear tape	Leave it on until it falls off (usually this happens 4 – 7 days after your surgery)
Staples	Talk to the co-coordinator about having your staples taken out 10 – 14 days after your surgery
Dissolvable sutures	Leave them alone. These will dissolve on their own within 10 days.

If our surgeon put an AV graft, your arm may swell for about 2 weeks after your surgery. To reduce this swelling, keep your arm up when you are resting. Put it on a pillow at the same level as your heart.

## **Pain Medication**

Before you leave, we will give you a prescription for Tylenol #3 (acetaminophen plus codeine). If you have an allergy to this medication, we will give you a different prescription. Most people need medication for only a few days.

## **Other Medications**

If you stopped your blood thinning medication before your surgery, please talk with your doctor about restarting this medication.

## **How do I care for my fistula or graft?**

- Check for a thrill several times per day. (A nurse will teach you how to do this).
- Do not use the arm with your access site for:
  - taking your blood pressure
  - giving blood
  - putting in an intravenous (IV)
- Do not sleep on your fistula or graft.
- Try not to bend the arm with your fistula or graft for long periods of time.



- Do not wear tight fitting clothing around your access arm.
- Do not put elastic bands, watchbands, purses or shopping bags on your access arm.
- Do not lift anything that is heavy with your fistula or graft arm.
- Never pick scabs near your graft or fistula needles sites.

### **Are there any complications of AV fistula and AV graft?**

Two major complications are possible:

1. Infection
2. Thrombosis (clotting of fistula or graft)

### **What are the warning signs of infection?**

- Warm painful area over your access site.
- Redness & swelling over your access site.
- Fever of more than 38.0 oC

### **What are the warning signs of thrombosis?**

- No bruit or sound over your access site.
- Painful hard swelling over your access site?

### **What should I do if I experience these symptoms or have questions?**

**Call:**

Vascular Access Co-ordinator	or	Hemodialysis Unit
(416) 340-4800		<b>(416) 340 - 5707</b>
Ext. 3518		<b>(416) 340 - 4072</b>

**After hours:**

If you think you have an infection,  
Please come to the Toronto General Hospital Emergency department.

