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POST OP INSTRUCTIONS FOR DIALYSIS VASCULAR ACCESS

You have had a vascular access for hemodialysis created in your arm. This access will provide the large blood flow needed when you have hemodialysis treatments. You have either an A-V fistula or an A-V graft.

1. **A-V fistula:** Arterio-venous fistula. This type of access connects one of your own arteries to one of your own veins. With this kind of access, you will be given instructions on how to “exercise” to develop the access after it heals.
2. **A-V graft:** Arterio-venous graft. This type of access connects an artery and a vein by using a piece of soft, plastic-like tubing. Both of these kinds of access need three to six weeks to heal and develop before it can actually be used for dialysis. Your doctor will tell you how long that will be for you.

To take care of your access after surgery you will need to:

1. **Keep your hand elevated as much as possible.** This will help decrease the swelling in your arm. Swelling may increase your risk for infection and slow your healing.
2. **Keep your elbow slightly bent.** A sharp bend at your elbow can increase swelling by slowing the return of blood to the heart.
3. **Check your surgical dressing or bandage for fluid or blood leaking through it.** If it does leak through during the first 24 hours after surgery, cover it with more sterile gauze and apply steady pressure over dressing for a few minutes. Do not take the bandage off until the day after surgery. Some oozing of fluid or blood is normal, but bleeding or drainage that saturates your bandage should be reported to your nurse or doctor.
4. **If you notice an increase in pain after the first 24 hours, report this to your nurse or doctor.**
5. **If your hand or fingers become cold or numb, CALL YOUR DOCTOR.** This can indicate a problem with your blood circulation that needs to be looked at as soon as possible.

Long Term Care of Your Access

1. **DO NOT** use bandages, tight sleeves, elastic garters, or other things that go all the way around your arm and can restrict circulation. This can slow blood flow through your access and allow it to become clotted and unusable. (Ladies, do not **not** carry your purse with the strap over your access arm.)
2. **DO NOT** allow anyone to take a blood pressure measurement on your access arm.
3. **DO NOT** allow blood to be drawn from your access arm, or IV's to be put in your access arm.
4. Avoid putting pressure on your access site. Carrying heavy items with your access arm (such as a sack of groceries) can put pressure on your access site.
5. Check your arm and access daily for the following items and report any changes to your nurse or doctor:
 - pulse, or feeling the blood flow through your access (you will be taught how to do this)
 - any noticeable changes in temperature of your access site or your hand
 - reddened, sore areas or a “pimple” on your access area

Call your doctor or nurse when you have any questions about your access area or how to care for it.