

# Caring for Your Fistula or Graft



Problem	What happens	What to do	How to prevent
<b>Bleeding</b> After dialysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bleeding from puncture sites after treatment</li> <li>Can be a medical emergency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Press down on access with gauze or clean cloth until bleeding stops</li> <li>If it won't stop, or there's a lot of bleeding, call 911!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep gauze and tape on 1-2 hours after dialysis, then remove</li> <li>Keep band aid on 6-8 hours after dialysis</li> <li>Carry band aids or gauze pads and tape with you all the time</li> </ul>
<b>Clotting</b> Access clogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You can't feel the buzz of blood rushing with your fingers (called the "thrill")</li> <li>Can cause access to fail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Call your doctor right away</li> <li>Call your dialysis center</li> <li>Don't eat or drink until you get directions from your doctor; may need surgery to remove the clot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check access every day—feel the thrill</li> <li>Avoid these with your access arm:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tight clothing or jewelry</li> <li>Sleeping on arm or with it bent</li> <li>No blood pressure on this arm</li> <li>Nothing heavy on top of arm</li> <li>No blood draws on this arm</li> </ul> </li> <li>Hold your punctures; don't use clamps</li> </ul>
<b>Infection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redness, pain, swelling, or pus in the access area</li> <li>May have fever</li> <li>Can cause access to fail, serious infection or death</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Call your doctor right away</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wash your access every day with soap</li> <li>Before dialysis—wash arm with antibacterial soap</li> <li>Remove band aids after 6-8 hours; replace band aids anytime they get wet</li> </ul>



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<p><b>Needle dislodgement</b></p> <p>One or two needles come out during dialysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An emergency!</li> <li>• Rapid blood loss                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Can result in death</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Press down firmly on access</li> <li>• Call for help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always keep access in view; never cover with blankets or clothing during dialysis</li> <li>• Ask for help to change positions, so blood lines don't get caught or pulled</li> <li>• Don't scratch around access site, remove or adjust tape on needles</li> <li>• Avoid lotion on arm; tape may not stick</li> </ul>
<p><b>Infiltration</b></p> <p>Dialysis needle goes through blood vessel wall</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pain and swelling, bruising</li> <li>• May not be able to use access until swelling goes down</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell staff right away if you have access pain during dialysis</li> <li>• May need to stop treatment</li> <li>• Put ice on right away and several times over the next 24 hours for 20 minutes each time</li> <li>• After 24 hours, put a warm washcloth on for 20 minutes several times a day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep arm still during dialysis                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use a reminder—ask your nurse for a piece of tape to secure your hand</li> <li>– Always ask for help before moving</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Explain to staff what works best for putting in your needles</li> <li>• Learn to put in your own needles—you know your access best!</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scarring</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard to get needles through skin</li> <li>• Harder for punctures to close, so more bleeding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See tips for prevention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't use numbing shots; ask about numbing cream if needed</li> <li>• Use different areas of your access for punctures each treatment</li> </ul>