

General Instructions Following AV Fistula Creation

***If you have increasing redness around the incision sites, thick drainage, or fever above 101°F
call the office as soon as possible (314-434-1211) to speak with our clinical staff.**

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Everyone's pain tolerance is different. You may be sore for following your surgery. Each day will get better, thereafter.
- You may or may not turn black and blue around your incision and surrounding tissue. Gravity will push the bruising down as it resolves.
- If we will be using your own artery/vein, then the fistula will need to mature for 3 months. If we are creating a fistula using a graft, then it will need to mature for a few weeks. If we are revising an existing fistula dialysis may be able to use it right away, depending on the surgery performed. Your surgeon will let you know when the fistula can be used.

INSTRUCTIONS

- If you do not have a drain, you may shower **2 full days after** your surgery. Remove the dressing. Leave steri-strips on, *if present*.
 - *If you have small strips of tape directly on your skin (steri-strips) under your dressing, leave those on and do not remove them until 7-10 days after surgery.*
- The sutures used in your surgery are most likely self-dissolving and should not need to be removed.

MEDICATIONS

- You may be sent home with prescription pain medicine. Try to first control pain with over the counter Tylenol or Ibuprofen (*Advil*), following package instructions. Use the narcotic pain prescription only if the Tylenol or Ibuprofen is not effective.
 - You **should not** drive while on pain medicine.
 - All narcotics cause severe constipation, as well as possible nausea and vomiting.
- If you take the prescription pain medicine, it is a good idea to take a stool softener to counteract constipation. You can also take Milk of Magnesia, MOM. All are over the counter.
 - If this is not effective in producing a bowel movement in **2 days**, please call our office for more instructions.

RESTRICTIONS

- You should try to avoid bumping or injuring your fistula.
- Keeping your arm propped up on pillows, above the level of your heart, and keep your elbow straight as to help reduce swelling the first few days after surgery.
- You should not do any strenuous exercise for 6-8 weeks unless directed otherwise. No lifting over 10-15 lbs. (*Ex: a gallon of milk weighs 8 lbs*)

FOLLOW UP

- Call the office for a “**post-op**” visit 1-2 weeks after your surgery.
 - *If staples are present, they will not be removed until 12-16 days post-op*
- Once dialysis is using your fistula without issue, call our office to make an appointment to have your Hemosplit catheter removed, *if present*.
- If dialysis tells you that they are getting high pressures or that something may be wrong with your access, your nephrologist may order a fistulogram. This will be scheduled through our office.
- If you have increasing redness around the incision, drainage, or fever above 101°F call the office.
 - If you experience numbness in your hands or they are cold to the touch or weak notify our office or your nephrologist.

The office is open for phone calls from 8am - 5 pm Monday-Thursday, Friday 8am -4 pm. For after hours, call the Medical Exchange @ 314-364-5262 to speak to the surgeon on call.

226 S. Woods Mill Road, Suite 49 West, Chesterfield, MO 63017 – 314-434-1211 – 314-434-4419 (fax)

HELPFUL HINTS

- Wash and pat dry your fistula arm thoroughly right before each treatment. Your dialysis facility will provide you with supplies.
- Talk to your nephrologist or dialysis until about special exercises you can do to strengthen the fistula after your incision has fully healed.
- Check the pulse (thrill) in your AV fistula 3 times daily – morning, afternoon and evening by both listening to the AV fistula and by feeling it. Any change in sound should be reported to your doctor. In order to feel for changes in the blood flow place fingers over fistula and monitor the motion of blood. The thrill should feel the same each time.
- Do not wear tight-fitting shirts. Do not wear jewelry (*bracelets*) that may restrict blood flow on your access arm.
- When carrying things (*groceries, bags, luggage*), make sure the straps or handles don’t tighten around your fistula.
- **When having your blood pressure taken or blood drawn, use your non-fistula arm.**
- When sitting or sleeping, make certain that your head, pillow or cushion doesn’t rest on your fistula