

PATIENT INFORMATION

A publication of Jackson-Madison County General Hospital Surgical Services

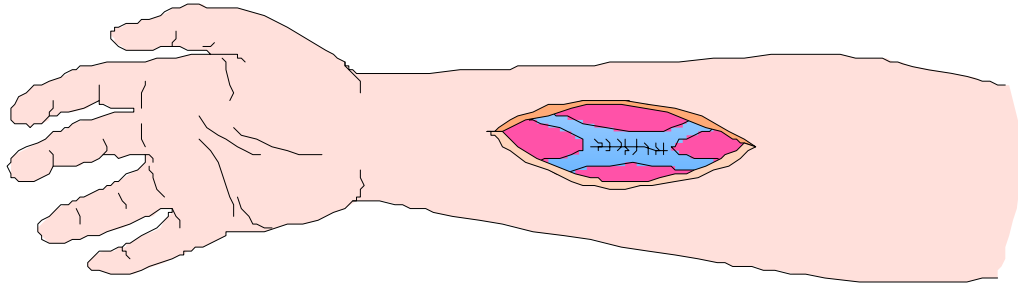
Your AV Fistula Surgery

You are scheduled to have surgery to place a dialysis fistula. The purpose of this handout is to help you know how to prepare for this surgery and what to expect during your surgery.

It is the hope of the surgery staff that you will feel that you receive very good care while you are a patient in our hospital. **We are here to serve you!** Please feel free to ask any questions that you have.

What is an AV Access Fistula?

- Before your dialysis, an access to your bloodstream must be made. The access provides a way for blood to be carried from your body to the dialysis machine and then back into your body.
- The fistula connects an artery to a vein. There are several types of fistulas. Your doctor will talk with you about which type of fistula is best for you.



A dialysis fistula connecting an artery to a vein.

- The fistula has to heal before it can be used for dialysis. Another type of access will be used for your dialysis until your fistula has healed.
- Two needles will be placed into the fistula at the start of each dialysis. Your blood flows through one tube to the dialysis machine.
- The dialysis machine cleans and filters out wastes and extra fluid. Then the blood is returned to your body through the other tube. The needles will be taken out at the end of each treatment.
- You need to understand that the fistula may fail or become blocked. If this happens, you may need further surgery on this fistula or you may need to have another access placed.

What do I need to do before surgery?

- You will need to take a shower the night before surgery and the morning of surgery before you come to the hospital with the special soap that you are given.
- Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before surgery.

- Please do not chew gum. (This raises the level of acid in your stomach.)
- If you take medicine for your blood pressure, heart, or asthma you may take this with a small sip of water before you come to the hospital. If you take diabetes medicines and/or insulin, talk with your doctor about whether you should take them.
- You may brush your teeth and rinse your mouth as long as you do not swallow any water.
- Do not wear makeup.
- Please remove all fingernail polish.
- Please remove all jewelry including any body piercings.
- Wear comfortable clothing that fits loosely through the arms and is easy to get into.
- Bring any medicines that you are taking with you to the hospital.
- Do not bring any valuables or large amounts of money with you to the hospital.
- Have a responsible adult drive you to the hospital, stay during your surgery, and drive you home. **You will not be allowed to drive yourself home.**

What can I expect the day of my surgery?

- After you have been to the Admitting Office you will be taken to a room. This may not be the room where you will be taken after surgery.
- You will be given a hospital gown and asked to remove all of your clothes including underwear and socks. Put on the gown opening in the back.
- You will also be asked to remove all dentures, partial plates, prosthesis, hairpieces, jewelry (including body piercings), contact lenses, and glasses.
- You will be asked questions about your medical history. Many of these will be the same questions that you have already been asked. Please know that we need to ask these again so that we can give you the best possible care.
- You may go straight to the operating room from your room or you may go to the Pre-Anesthesia Unit (PAU). If you go to PAU, you will be there for about one hour before your surgery.
- Your nurse will tell your family where to wait.
- You will have an IV started (needle in your arm for fluids). Medicine will be given to you to help you relax.
- Someone from anesthesia (the person who will give you medicine in the operating room) will talk with you.
- When the doctor is ready, you will be taken to the operating room. The room will be cold. The nurse will give you a warm blanket.
- The operating room staff includes your doctor and his assistant, an anesthetist, a circulating nurse, and a scrub nurse. All of these people are there to take care of you and no one else.
- You will have sticky pads placed on your chest so that the staff can watch your heart. A blood pressure cuff will be placed on your arm or leg so that your blood pressure can be checked. A device called a pulse oximeter will be put on your finger. It will tell how much oxygen is in your blood.
- The anesthetist will give you medicine in the IV to make you drowsy. The doctor will give you local medicine (medicine that will numb the area). Your doctor may choose to have you asleep during the operation. If you are to be asleep, the

anesthetist will put a soft mask over your face to give you plenty of oxygen. You will be given medicine in your IV to help you relax to the point of sleep.

- After the operation starts, the nurse will call your family to let them know how you are doing. Your family will be called about once an hour.
- When your surgery is over, the anesthetist will give you medicine to help you wake up.
- You will go to the Recovery Room for about one hour. The nurse in the Recovery Room will be checking your heart rate, blood pressure, and oxygen level. Tell your nurse if you have any pain or feel sick to your stomach. The nurse will have medicine for you.
- When you are awake you will be taken to your room.
- Your doctor will talk to your family when your surgery is over.
- You will be given something to eat and drink and you will be asked to empty your bladder.
- Most people are able to go home later in the day.

Home Care Instructions for a Dialysis Fistula

Checking for clotting:

- Check the fistula at least three times a day—morning, afternoon, and at bedtime for blood flow.
- Put your fingers over the fistula. When blood flows through the fistula, it causes a fluttery feeling or wave-like feeling. This is called a “thrill.”
- The thrill should feel the same each time. If the thrill feels different or if you are not able to feel it, call your dialysis unit or kidney doctor during the day. If it happens during the night, call the next morning.
- After the incision has healed within a week to ten days the doctor will want you to start exercising that arm with an exercise ball (a tennis ball or squeeze ball will work) several times a day. These exercises are very crucial to the development of your fistula.

To reduce the risk of clotting:

- As long as there is swelling, keep the arm propped up on pillows so that it is above the level of your heart. (Swelling will cause you to have pain.)
- Do not wear clothes that are tight on your arm.
- Do not wear sleeves with elastic.
- Do not wear your watch on that arm.
- Do not let anyone take your blood pressure, draw blood, or start an IV in that arm.
- Do not lift heavy objects or carry your purse on that arm.
- Avoid injury to the arm; protect it from bumping.
- Be careful and try not to sleep on that arm.

Dressings:

- Most bandages are taken off two days after surgery.
- If you have the kind of stitches that must be taken out, it is usually done in two weeks at the dialysis clinic.
- If steri-strips are used over the incision, once they curl up on the ends and become loose, you can remove them.
- Every time that the fistula is used for dialysis, the nurse will put two small dressings or Band-Aids[®] over the site. These can be removed the next day.

For bleeding:

- If your fistula bleeds, place a finger on top of the bleeding and press down firmly until it stops. This may take several minutes. When it stops, put a Band-Aid[®] on it.
- **If it does not stop in a few minutes, call your dialysis clinic or kidney doctor; if it happens at night call 911 or go to the emergency room.**

Call your doctor if you:

- Can't feel the thrill in your fistula.
- Have pain or numbness in your hand or arm.
- Have bleeding, redness, or warmth around your fistula.
- The area near your fistula suddenly bulges out more than usual.
- Have a fever above 100.5°F twice or chills.
- Have drainage from your incision.

Be sure to keep your appointments for dialysis and for your follow-up visit with your doctor.

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