



CARING FOR AN **AVF & AVG**

Proper care of your dialysis access is very important. You should check your access every day and inform your care team if you have any concerns.

Feel for the thrill in your fistula

The thrill is the vibration you feel as blood flows through your fistula or graft. A decrease or absence of the thrill may indicate that your access isn't working as well as it should.

Listen for the bruit

You can hear the bruit or swooshing sound in your access by putting your arm up to your ear or by using a stethoscope. It is important that you know what it usually sounds like. If you hear a whistle or it's not as loud as usual, this could indicate that your access isn't working properly.

Check for signs of infection

If you have an infection in your access or in your bloodstream you may have a fever, chills or feel unwell. If you have an infection in your access you may notice that an area of the access is warm, red, swollen or painful to touch. You may also notice pus or fluid leaking out of old needle holes. If you have an infection you may need to take antibiotics or be admitted to the hospital.

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Infection Prevention

It is very important to try and prevent infection. You can do this by always following your clinic's instructions for preparing your access for needling. This includes proper hand washing and cleansing of the needle sites and surrounding area (e.g., the arm or leg).

Do not put prolonged pressure on your access

Don't wear tight sleeves or tight watches or bracelets on your access arm. If possible you should also avoid sleeping on your access arm. This could restrict blood flow and cause your access to stop working properly.

Do not allow your access limb to be used for any blood pressure readings, bloodwork or intravenous.

Report any numbness, tingling, pain, discolouration or coldness of the hand on your access arm or foot of your access leg

These symptoms can mean that there is less blood going to your hand. If you have these symptoms you may have to see the surgeon in order to correct the problem.

Need this information in an accessible format?

1-855-460-2647, TTY (416) 217-1815 publicaffairs@cancercare.on.ca.

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About the Chronic Kidney Disease Vascular Access Fact Sheets:

This Fact Sheet was created by the Ontario Renal Network ("ORN"), a work unit within Cancer Care Ontario ("CCO"), in collaboration with the Provincial Vascular Access Working Group ("PVAWG") to provide patients with standardized educational material about Catheters. This Fact Sheet is to be used for informational purposes only. This Fact Sheet is not a substitute for medical advice. This Fact Sheet may not include all relevant information and is not an exhaustive resource. Always consult with your healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns. The information in this Fact Sheet does not create a physician-patient relationship between CCO/ORN/PVAWG and you.