



# CATHETER FACT SHEET

## WHAT IS A CATHETER

A vascular access is needed to continuously take blood to the dialysis machine to be cleaned and returned to the body. An arteriovenous or AV fistula is the preferred choice for vascular access when feasible. There are some patients for which creating an AV fistula may not be possible.

A **catheter** is a flexible, hollow tube inserted into a vein in the neck, chest, or groin that rests in the heart and allows blood to flow from the body to the dialysis machine. A dressing is used to cover the area where the catheter exits the skin.

## Catheter facts

- are used when hemodialysis is required urgently, for temporary use or when waiting for an AV fistula or an AV graft to be made
- are used in patients who do not have veins or arteries suitable for an AV fistula or a AV graft
- are associated with a higher risk of infection compared to AV fistulas or AV grafts
- require frequent interventions (i.e insertion of a new catheter) to improve blood flow
- have a higher risk of narrowing or clotting of veins
- patients with catheters cannot go swimming

## What can I expect after my catheter is inserted?

- You may experience mild pain or bruising near the catheter exit site following insertion. Once the catheter site has healed, there should not be any redness, drainage, tenderness or pain over the site.



**VERY IMPORTANT** Inform your dialysis nurse of any chills, fever, or catheter site pain.

# CATHETER FACT SHEET

## How do I care for my catheter?

- Keep all dressings dry and intact at all times after your catheter has been inserted.
- You may be asked to wear a mask over your nose and mouth when your dressing is being changed.



**VERY IMPORTANT** If you develop any swelling on your arm or neck (on the same side of catheter), swelling in the face, or have difficulty breathing, it is important to notify your dialysis nurse.

## What do I need to do before hemodialysis treatments?

- Wash your hands when you arrive in the dialysis unit.
- You may be asked to wear a mask when you are being connected or disconnected to the machine.
- Do not touch or remove your catheter dressing.
- Notify your dialysis nurse of any tenderness or drainage around the catheter, or any chills, fever, or flu like symptoms.

## What do I need to do after hemodialysis treatments?

- Do not swim.
- Do not shower unless you have been approved and instructed to use shower techniques by your vascular access team.
- If you have bleeding from the catheter (should your clamps or caps fall off), notify your dialysis nurse.

*If you are using a catheter ask your vascular access team about the next steps to have an AV fistula or AV graft created.*

*Carry your Save My Veins wallet-card to inform your healthcare provider to protect your arm veins.*

## Important contact numbers:

Kidney Doctor \_\_\_\_\_

Surgeon \_\_\_\_\_

Dialysis Unit \_\_\_\_\_

Vascular Access Team \_\_\_\_\_

### 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.

Need this information in an accessible format?

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

ORN4011E