

# AV (Artery-Vein) Fistula Surgery

## After Visit Summary

This is general information. Please see your After Visit Summary for how to take care of yourself after surgery.

Your health care team will work with you to understand any challenges you have after your hospital stay. This will help your team work toward a plan to make sure you have the right care and support to help manage your health after you leave the hospital.

## Your Surgery

An AV fistula is a tunnel created by joining an artery and a vein in your arm.

This tunnel lets blood from the artery to flow into the vein to make it bigger. The bigger vein makes it easier to put needles in your arm for kidney dialysis.

## What to Expect After Surgery

- When the medicine wears off, the surgery site may hurt. This usually lasts only 1 or 2 days.
- The hand of your arm with the fistula may become swollen. This should go away during healing.
- Your arm and hand may be numb and tingle. This may last for weeks or months.
- After the surgery, the area will need to heal for up to 8 weeks before it can be used for dialysis.

## Before the Surgery

- Tell your health care provider if you:
  - are pregnant
  - have a latex allergy
  - have diabetes
  - take a blood-thinner medicine.
- Remove any jewelry or piercings.
- Arrange to have someone drive you home. You will not be able to drive after the surgery.

## Pain Relief

- Take any prescription or over-the-counter medicine as directed.

## Activity

- Use your arm as little as possible. Try to avoid injury.
- Leave the dressing on until you have a dialysis appointment or see your health care provider for a follow-up.
- To help ease swelling in your hand or arm, put your arm on pillows so it is higher than your heart.
- Do your wrist and elbow exercises as directed.
- Your health care provider will tell you when it's OK for you to shower, drive, return to work, exercise, lift, and have sex.

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- Slowly return to your regular level of activity.
- Follow your health care provider's directions for how much you can safely lift.
- Rest as needed.
- Avoid tobacco and secondhand smoke. They can slow your recovery.

## Arm Care

- Avoid direct pressure on your arm.
- Do not have blood pressure checks or blood draws on your arm.
- Do not wear tight sleeves, watches or jewelry on your arm.
- Check for a pulse in your wrist twice a day. If you do not feel a pulse, call your health care provider or the dialysis unit.

## Incision Care

- Steri-Strips® (paper-like tape) may have been placed on your incision. You may peel them off after 7 days.
- Follow any directions your health care provider gives you.
- Do not use lotions, creams, ointments, gels or powders on your incision site.

## Food and Beverages

- Follow your health care provider's directions for what to eat and drink.
- Avoid alcohol while you are taking prescription pain medicine.

## When To Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider if you:

- have a temperature of 101 F or higher
- can't find a pulse in your affected wrist
- have new pain or pain you can't control
- have bleeding that soaks through the bandage
- have changes in your circulation:
  - increasing numbness
  - inability to feel or move fingers
  - pale blue, white or unusually cold fingers
- have signs of infection at your incision site:
  - pain
  - swelling
  - redness
  - odor
  - warmth
  - green or yellow discharge
- are unable to get out of bed
- have nausea (upset stomach) or vomiting (throwing up) that won't stop
- have any questions or concerns.

## Follow-up Appointment

Please keep all follow-up appointments with your health care provider or specialist, even if you are feeling well.