

Gortex[®] Graft

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A Gortex graft is a piece of tubing that joins an artery to a vein. The graft creates an internal access to the bloodstream. You need an access created to receive kidney dialysis.

During dialysis your blood is filtered through an artificial kidney machine to remove waste and fluid.

The graft will be put in your arm during surgery. When possible, your health care provider will select the arm you use less often.

Before and During Surgery

The health care provider uses the following steps to put in the Gortex graft:

- The area is shaved and scrubbed with an antiseptic soap.
- A local anesthetic is used to numb the area.
- Once the area is numb, the doctor makes a cut into your forearm to find an artery and a vein.
- Once the artery and vein are found, the health care provider stitches one end of the graft to the artery and stitches the other end to a vein.
- The health care provider checks the graft for good blood flow.
- He or she closes the surgery site and puts a sterile bandage on it.

Gortex grafts cannot be used for hemodialysis (the type of kidney dialysis you are having) right away after surgery. The grafts need 4 to 6 weeks to heal.

After Surgery

- The arm with the graft should be protected and used as little as possible for as long as your health care provider says.
- When the anesthetic wears off, the surgery site will be painful. This usually lasts only a day or two. You will get pain medicine to relieve the discomfort.
- The hand of your arm with the graft will become swollen. This will go away during healing. To lessen the swelling, you may put your arm on pillows so it is higher than your heart.
- Your hand may also be numb and tingle because your blood vessels and nerves are trying to heal after surgery. Sometimes it takes weeks or months for the numbness and tingling to go away.
- A small amount of bleeding from the surgery site is normal.
- Do not allow blood pressure readings or blood draws to be taken on your affected arm.
- Do not wear tight (or constrictive) clothing on your affected arm.

(over)

When to Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider right away if you:

- have pain at your surgery site that continues for a long time or becomes severe
- have a lot of swelling in your hand
- bleed a lot, or if blood soaks through to the outside of the bandage
- have a fever of more than 100 F.