

## How to Care for your Haemodialysis Catheter

### Introduction

This leaflet provides advice for patients with a dialysis catheter. You will receive individual instructions on how to care for your catheter.

If you have concerns or questions please ask a doctor or nurse in the Kidney Unit.

### What is a dialysis catheter and why do I need it?

For dialysis to work there must be a way of taking blood from you to pump it into the kidney machine and back to your bloodstream. A dialysis catheter (sometimes called a 'line') is one way of doing this and it can be used more or less straight away.

#### There are two main types of dialysis catheters used:

#### Temporary (non-cuffed) dialysis catheter

The catheter is placed through the skin into one of the large veins in the neck or the groin at the top of the thigh. Temporary catheters are used when it is likely that a catheter will only be needed for a few days or when it is important to start dialysis quickly and plan a more permanent solution later.

#### Tunnelled (cuffed) dialysis catheter

Tunnelled, cuffed catheters are also placed into a vein in your neck. In addition the catheter passes under the skin between your neck and chest wall (through a tunnel) so that it comes out of the skin just below the collarbone. Tunnelled catheters are used when it is likely that a catheter will be needed for several weeks. Tunnelled catheters are more comfortable and less likely to develop infection than temporary catheters.

### Taking care of your dialysis catheter

Your dialysis catheter allows direct access to your blood stream. It is a very vulnerable site and at risk of infection. In partnership with you we would like to minimize this risk by asking you to follow these recommendations:

- To reduce the risk of infection, personal hygiene and proper care of your dialysis catheter is essential. The nurse looking after you in the Day Case Unit will give you a leaflet together with a tube of Mupirocin Ointment and will discuss this with you in more detail.
- Please do not get the dialysis catheter wet in the shower. A bath is preferable. You may be able to obtain waterproof dressings on prescription from your GP, discuss with your dialysis nurse.
- Take care not to pull, push or bend the dialysis catheter when washing or dressing.
- Do not use sharp objects, such as scissors around the dialysis catheter. Gentlemen may continue to shave but it is advisable to cover the dialysis catheter with a small towel to keep it dry.
- Wear clothing which is loose fitting and easy to remove when attending for your dialysis treatments. This is important as your nurse needs access to your dialysis catheter for your dialysis treatment and change of dressing. A front opening shirt or blouse is preferable.

You must telephone your dialysis unit or the renal ward immediately if you experience any of the following:

1. You develop a high temperature, chills, shivering or sweating. These are symptoms of infection, which must be treated promptly. The catheter may have to be removed and you may need to be given antibiotics.
2. Pain, redness, soreness or swelling around the exit site of the dialysis catheter, which may indicate infection
3. The stitches holding the dialysis catheter in place break. The dialysis catheter will be more likely to fall out if the stitches break or become dislodged. Stitches for temporary catheters remain in place until the catheter is removed. There are two sets of stitches for a tunnelled catheter.

Those at the insertion site can be removed after 7-10 days. Those at the exit site from the tunnel should stay in place for 3-4 weeks.

4. The dialysis catheter falls out. If this happens, apply firm pressure to the exit site to stop any bleeding.
5. One of the caps comes off the end of the dialysis catheter. The clamp on the catheter must be clamped off at all times to stop blood flowing out of the catheter and air getting in.

## Preventing infection

Any member of staff who touches the catheter must undertake strict procedures to prevent infection. Hands must be thoroughly washed and the correct equipment used; a visor or a face shield is worn by staff when cleaning or accessing your catheter, and also sterile gloves and plastic apron. If you do not think that a member of staff is taking appropriate precautions please discuss your concerns with them. We discourage the use of dialysis catheters for any purpose other than dialysis treatment (for example it cannot be used for taking blood or giving medication; unless there is absolutely no alternative). Anything that touches the exit site of the catheter and anything that goes into the catheter must be sterile. Your nurse can give you further advice and show you how to care for the dialysis catheter properly.

### To contact us:

We hope that this information is helpful. If you have any concerns about your dialysis catheter or have not understood anything you have been told please ask your nurse. If you are not in the hospital but need advice you can ring us:

- Monday-Friday (except bank holidays) 08:30-16:30, please contact one of the Renal Day Case Unit staff nurses on **01392 404791/4792**
- At other times or if the above number is unavailable, please ring Creedy Ward on **01392 402590** or the hospital switchboard on **01392 411611** and ask for the **Renal Bleep Holder**

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