A-V Fistula Care

A *fistula* is formed surgically by joining an artery and a vein. This may have been done under local or general sedation. You may feel dizzy, weak or drowsy for as long as 24 hours after receiving the anesthetic.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE

- **DO NOT** drive a car or take public transportation alone.
- **DO NOT** drink alcohol or take medications that have not been prescribed by your caregiver.
- **DO NOT** sign important papers or make important decisions.
- Have a responsible person with you.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Following surgery, the vein will need time to enlarge and mature. The vein needs to mature so needles can be inserted for dialysis. To help this along, your caregiver will show you the exact steps needed to make this happen.
- Keep dressings clean and dry. Keep the arm elevated above your heart on a pillow. Rest and take your medicine as prescribed.
- Use this arm as usual for all activities.
- The stitches or tape closures will be removed in 10-14 days, or as indicated by your caregiver.
- **DO NOT** sleep or lie on the area of the fistula or that arm. This may decrease or stop the blood flow through your fistula.
- **DO NOT** allow blood pressures to be taken on this arm.
- **DO NOT** allow blood drawing to be done from the graft.
- If you notice redness, swelling, excessive pain or drainage (*infection*), or if you do not feel a pulse or buzzing in your fistula, call your Dialysis Unit or call your caregiver to arrange a time to check your arm.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Fever develops.
- Swelling around the fistula gets worse and/or new pain develops.
- Unusual bleeding develops at the location of the fistula or from any other area.
- Pus or other drainage is seen at the fistula location.
- Skin redness and/or red streaking is seen on the skin around, above or below the fistula location.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Pain, numbness, or an unusual pale skin color develops in the hand on the side of your fistula.
- Dizziness or weakness develops that you have not had before.
- Shortness of breath develops.
- Chest pain develops.
- The fistula disconnects or breaks with bleeding that cannot be easily controlled.

Call for local emergency medical help. DO NOT try to drive yourself to the hospital.

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