

# Your Hemodialysis Access: Care Instructions

## Your Care Instructions

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Hemodialysis, or dialysis, is the use of a machine to remove wastes from your blood. You need it if your kidneys are not able to remove wastes on their own. A dialysis access is the place in your arm, or sometimes in your leg, where a doctor creates a blood vessel that carries a large flow of blood. When you have dialysis, two needles are placed in this blood vessel and are connected to the dialysis machine. Your blood flows out of one needle and into the machine to be cleaned. Then your cleaned blood flows back into your body through the other needle. Sometimes, a doctor makes a short-term access through a tube, called a catheter, placed in your neck, upper chest, or groin.

Your doctor creates an access during a minor surgery. You need to take care of your access to keep it working and to prevent infection.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

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- After your doctor creates an access, keep it dry for at least 2 days.
- Squeeze a soft ball or other object as instructed after the access is placed. This will help blood flow through the access and help prevent blood clots.
- After you have dialysis, check to see whether the access bleeds or swells. Let your doctor know if your arm bleeds or swells.
- Do not lift anything heavy with the arm that has the access.
- Do not bump your arm.
- Do not wear tight clothing or jewelry over the access.
- Do not sleep with your access arm under your body.
- Have blood drawn or blood pressure taken from your other arm.
- Keep the access clean and dry.
- Do not put cream or lotion on or near the access.

## When should you call for help?

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**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have signs of infection, such as:
  - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness around the access.
  - Red streaks leading from the access.
  - Pus draining from the access.
  - Swollen lymph nodes in your neck, armpits, or groin.

- A fever.
- You do not feel a pulse in your access.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You have pain, swelling, or bleeding. Some pain or swelling is normal after surgery to create the access. But pain and swelling should get better over time.



## Where can you learn more?

Go to [NextGen Knowledgebase](#).

Enter **L169** in the search box to learn more about "**Your Hemodialysis Access: Care Instructions.**"

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