

Patient Information

Caring for your Haemodialysis Catheter

Renal Department



Introduction

This leaflet provides you with advice on how to care for your haemodialysis catheter, also known as a renal dialysis catheter (RDC).

If you have any concerns or questions, please ask a doctor or nurse in the dialysis unit.



There are two main types of dialysis catheter used:

Temporary (non-cuffed) dialysis catheter - 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 - used when it is likely that a catheter will be needed for several weeks. They are more comfortable and less likely to develop infection than temporary catheters.

After insertion, the renal dialysis catheter is held in place by sutures (stitches):

- Temporary catheter stitches remain in place until the catheter is removed.
- For a tunnelled catheter there are two sets of stitches. Those at the insertion site can be removed after 7-10 days, and those at the exit site from the tunnel should stay in place for 2-3 weeks.

Caring for your renal dialysis catheter

Your dialysis catheter allows direct access to your bloodstream. It is a very vulnerable site and at risk of infection. To help to care for it and to minimise the risk of infection, you must:

- keep the dressing in place at all times. This will be changed on a regular basis by the dialysis nurses.
- maintain good personal hygiene to reduce the risk of picking up an infection.
- not get the dialysis catheter wet (avoid deep baths and swimming). Take care to keep it dry even when taking a bath/shower. If the dressing gets wet, bacteria may enter the exit site or line and cause an infection. You may be able to obtain waterproof shower covers on prescription from your GP. Please ask your dialysis nurse for the details of shower covers available.
- take care not to pull, push, bend or pinch the dialysis catheter. Do not use sharp objects, such as scissors around the dialysis catheter.
- take care not to scratch the exit site or surrounding area. This can cause a break in the skin and allow germs to enter your body.
- wear loose fitting clothes which are easy to remove when attending for your dialysis treatment. This is important as your nurse needs access to your dialysis catheter for your dialysis treatment and change of dressing.

We recommend that you **do not** take part in any contact sports. If you do, please ensure that your catheter is securely taped to your chest. Ask your nurse for advice.

Signs and symptoms of infection

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

- Fever (high temperature).
- Sweating.
- Chills.
- Red or swollen skin around the exit site.
- Pain or oozing pus/discharge from the exit site.
- Generally feeling unwell.

The above are symptoms of infection and **must be treated urgently**. The catheter may have to be removed and you may need to be given antibiotics.

What other urgent situations should I be aware of?

Please read the following information carefully so that you are aware of who to call in an emergency:

- **The caps fall off / the clamps break / tubing becomes cut or damaged by the clamps** - If the cap falls off and the clamps break at the same time, or if the tubing becomes cut or punctured between the clamps and the skin, pinch the tubing with your fingers between the broken clamp or damaged tubing and the skin to prevent air from entering. **This must be treated as an emergency by dialling 999.** You must then lie on your left side with your feet up and head down until help arrives. This helps to prevent damage caused by air entering the bloodstream.
- **The dialysis catheter falls out** - Immediately apply firm pressure to the site with a clean towel/tea towel to stop any bleeding. Contact your dialysis unit. If bleeding is heavy or does not stop, dial 999 for an ambulance.

- **Bleeding from around the exit site** - Apply pressure to the exit site with a clean towel/tea towel, and contact the dialysis unit. If unable to stop the bleeding, this must be treated as an emergency by dialling 999.
- **The dialysis catheter dislodges, but doesn't fall out** - Never attempt to push it back in as this could introduce infection or could go into the wrong blood vessel. Immediately contact your dialysis unit for advice.
- **The dressing becomes wet or displaced, exposing the exit site** - Contact your dialysis unit to have your dialysis catheter exit site dressing changed to prevent infection.

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 face shield is worn by staff when cleaning or accessing your catheter, as well as gloves and a plastic apron.
- **If you do not think that a member of staff is taking appropriate precautions, please discuss your concerns with them or a member of the nursing team.**
- During dressing changes and when the dialysis catheter is being connected/disconnected, avoid breathing or coughing over your line to reduce the risk of germs entering the bloodstream.
- **Unless it is for a medical emergency, the line should not be used for any purpose other than renal dialysis. All persons using the catheter line must have received training in its use.**

What if I have any questions?

If you have any concerns or questions, please speak to a member of the nursing team on the renal dialysis unit.

Please use this space to write down any questions you wish to ask the staff:

Further Information

National Kidney Foundation - www.kidney.org

The Renal Association - www.renal.org

Kidney Patients UK (NKF) - www.kidney.org.uk

Kidney Patient Guide - www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk

British Renal Society - www.britishrenal.org

NHS Choices - www.nhs.uk

Additional patient information leaflets are also available on our Trust website: <https://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk/patient-information/>

Contact details

If you have any questions regarding your access, the **Dialysis Access Co-ordinator** is available Monday to Friday, 8am – 4pm and can be contacted on **01438 284624**.

A message can be left on the answer phone. Alternatively telephone 01438 314333 and ask for the switchboard to page 0765 913 0921.

Other useful numbers

Ward 6B, Nephrology (Renal) Ward, Lister Hospital	01438 285063
Renal Liaison Department	01438 285255
Home Dialysis Therapy Department	01438 284100
Lister Haemodialysis Unit	01438 284152
St Albans Haemodialysis Unit	01727 897588
Luton & Dunstable Haemodialysis Unit	01582 497538
Bedford Renal Unit	01438 286750
Harlow Renal Unit	01279 278205

Acknowledgements

British Renal Society Vascular Access Special Interest Group. Information for patients. Central venous catheter. July 2018

North Bristol NHS Trust. Patient Information - How to care for your haemodialysis Catheter. May 2014

www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk

You can request this information in a different format or another language.

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