

Tunnelled Dialysis Catheter

Your nephrologist has spoken to you about the need to start dialysis soon. Dialysis removes waste products and excess fluid from the blood with a filter (the artificial kidney). Access to the bloodstream is needed to direct enough blood to the artificial kidney. The access can be a dialysis catheter in a large blood vessel or an arteriovenous (fistula (AV shunt)). An AV fistula is a surgical connection between a vein and an artery. For more information on this, ask for the leaflet: AV Fistula Surgery.

This leaflet provides information on:

- the tunnelled dialysis catheter;
- how to deal with it;
- what to do if problems arise.

If you have any questions after reading this information, ask the dialysis nurse or your nephrologist.

What is a tunnelled dialysis catheter?

The dialysis catheter is a plastic tube. A vascular surgeon or surgical trainee inserts it into a large blood vessel (vein) in the neck (under the collarbone).

Insertion takes place in the operating room.

Inserting the catheter

You will be covered with sterile drapes, and your face may be covered too, if necessary. This prevents you from seeing the surgery.

The catheter can be used immediately after insertion. After insertion, the site of the catheter may be a little sensitive and the entry site may bleed a little. The doctor will secure the catheter with a stitch. This may also be sensitive and restrict your freedom of movement initially. The catheter will be closed with a cap and an extra clamp so that no blood comes out.

We will check and clean the catheter at each dialysis session.

The advantage of the tunnelled catheter is that it can stay in place for a long time. Once in the blood vessel, the line is tunnelled under the skin. After insertion, the line is stitched in two places. You will have stitches in your neck and where the line exits the body. The stitches in your neck are dissolvable and do not need to be removed. The stitches securing the line will be removed after 14 days.

The information in this leaflet is of a general nature and is meant to give you an idea of the care and information you can expect. Other advice or procedures may apply depending on your situation. This leaflet only serves as an addition to the specific information from your specialist or practitioner.



Aftercare

The dialysis nurse will check and clean your catheter on the dialysis ward. You also have an important role to play.

The site where the catheter enters the skin is covered with a sterile plaster.

- Do not change the plaster yourself at home. If the plaster is loose, do not remove it. You can stick another plaster over it.
- Make sure the catheter does not come under tension.
- You may shower with a tunnelled catheter after two weeks, as long as the plaster is stuck on properly.

If the catheter dislodges or falls out

If the catheter unexpectedly falls out of the blood vessel, use a sterile gauze or clean cloth to apply pressure to the puncture hole for at least 15 minutes. Contact the dialysis department immediately and follow the instructions of the dialysis nurse.

Note: do not push the catheter back in if it dislodges or falls out of the blood vessel. Tape the catheter securely and contact the dialysis department immediately because of the risk of infection.

Purposes other than dialysis

The dialysis catheter must not be used for purposes other than dialysis treatment without consulting the attending nephrologist. For example, the drawing of blood through the catheter by a laboratory or a GP is not permitted. This also applies to the administration of medication via the catheter.

Contact

Contact the dialysis department if:

- the catheter falls out of the blood vessel or becomes dislodged;
- you have a fever;
- you have blood loss along or through the catheter;
- the dressing gets wet;
- the tape becomes loose;
- you have pain at the insertion site;
- the area around the catheter insertion site becomes inflamed (pus, warm, red, pain);
- the caps come off the catheter;
- the catheter's stitches break.

Availability

You can contact the dialysis department from Monday to Saturday from 07:00 to 19:30 at +31 40 888 92 00.

Outside the above times, please call the general hospital number: +31 40 888 80 00. The night door attendant will connect you.