



Access Planning

Your Nephrologist or surgeon will likely schedule some tests before surgery to find the best place for an AV Fistula (a type of access).

Vein mapping uses ultrasound to measure the arteries and veins in your arms. An IV with X-Rays may also be used to visualize the veins.

Allow no BPs, IVs or blood draws from the arm where the AV Fistula will be placed.



Be Ready for Surgery

Some questions you may want to ask the surgeon:

- Where will the AV Fistula be placed in my arm?
- How long will surgery take?
- What are the pre-operative instructions?
- How long is the incision?
- When can I go home?
- How much pain will I have?



Care After Fistula Placement

Some surgeons use dissolvable sutures; others use regular sutures that are removed in 2-3 weeks at the surgeon's office. The gauze bandage can be changed at home as needed. Pain medication is provided.

You should not wear tight clothing or watches; or carry a purse over the AV Fistula site.



Development of the Fistula

Feel the thrill - the new AV Fistula will have a buzzing feeling in the vein after surgery. Feel for the thrill every day. This is how you know the AV Fistula is working. Exercises will help the vein grow into a useable AV Fistula. Ask your healthcare team to teach you the exercises. Watch the vein grow larger over the next 4-6 weeks.



Ease the Ouch

The first few times a needle is inserted into a new fistula are likely to be the most difficult. To ease the ouch and make this experience more comfortable, your healthcare team MAY:

- Use the most experienced staff for the first few starts
- Use smaller needles at first
- Use only one needle for the first treatment if possible



Fear of Needles

You can help manage the fear:

- Choose "Not to Look" during the needle insertions
- Distract yourself with pleasant thoughts
- Use available medications for anxiety or to numb the skin
- Take control and learn to place your own needle