

How Do I Look?

Body Image is how you see and feel about your physical appearance.

Self-Esteem involves how much a person values him/herself and appreciates his/her worth and importance.

Self Esteem is related to **Body Image** for several reasons:

- People care about how others view them.
 - People want to fit in and not stand out or appear different.
 - People feel judged and evaluated according to looks.
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For the Kidney Patient considering Vascular Access, **Body Image** may be a serious matter affecting both their attitude and **sense of well-being**. It may even be a major contributing factor to depression.

Patients may postpone or refuse an AV Fistula because of concerns about **Body Image**.

How Will I Look?

Some issues people may have when considering AV Fistula as an access include:

- The appearance of scar tissue after surgery
 - The appearance of “bulging veins” at the access site
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Express Your Concerns

Do not feel embarrassed expressing your concerns about how the AV Fistula will look. Talk to your social worker or other dialysis professional about how you are feeling.

Focus on the Facts

Talk to your Vascular Surgeon about the size of the surgical incision (usually 2-4 inches long).

[Ask about vein mapping prior to placement!](#)

Discuss with your Nephrologist and Health Care Team what to expect as the AV Fistula matures.

I Look Good.

What to Expect

- Some change occurs naturally as the AV Fistula matures. The vein wall thickens and increases in diameter. Eventually the vein grows strong enough to stand up to the increased pressure of the arterial blood flow needed for adequate dialysis.
- Bulging of the vein does not occur naturally as part of maturation. It may occur as a result of an aneurysm, or weak spot in the arterial wall causing the access to balloon out. **The risk of developing an aneurysm can be decreased with rotation of needle sites.**

Stay Informed

- Ask about new cannulation techniques, such as the buttonhole method.
- Ask about self-cannulation (learn to place the needles yourself) as a way to preserve your access.
- Learn about AV Fistula care and monitoring.
- Talk to other patients about how they cope with the physical changes on a day-to-day basis.

Celebrate Your Uniqueness!