



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Wound Care Discharge Advice Following Dialysis Access Surgery

Information for patients, relatives and carers

## **Renal Medicine**

① For more information, please contact:

Renal Specialist Nurse

Telephone: 01904 725486 or 01904 721852

York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

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# Introduction

Operation type.....

Date.....

Your wound has been closed with (tick as appropriate):

- ☐ Stitches that dissolve
- ☐ Steri-strips to the skin
- ☐ Stitches that need removing
- ☐ Staples that need removing
- ☐ There is nothing to be removed

If you have stitches or staples that need removing after you go home, a district nurse or your GP practice nurse will remove them and check your wound.

If you are on dialysis, your renal unit will change your dressings and remove stitches or clips if needed.

☐ We have arranged for a district nurse to visit you at home on.....

☐ Please arrange an appointment with the practice nurse at your GP surgery for.....

☐ Your steri-strips can be removed after seven days. (If they fall off before this time, don't worry). If you feel able to do this yourself then you can. If not, then please contact your GP surgery to arrange a district nurse to visit, or to see the practice nurse at the surgery.

# **How to look after your wound**

Your nurse will have checked your dressing before you go home. If you stay in hospital overnight, the dressing may be renewed before you go home if there has been any leakage.

The ward nurse will supply you with a packet of gauze swabs, some tape, and a spare wound dressing to take home.

Keep the wound dry for 48 hours.

Ideally the dressing from theatre should be left undisturbed for the first 24 hours after your operation. If there is some bleeding through the dressing during this time, then a dressing pad of sterile gauze can be applied over the top. If there is a lot of bleeding please contact your GP or the hospital for advice (see contact numbers on the last page).

After the first 24 hours, your dressing can be changed if blood or bloodstained fluid has leaked through, or if it gets wet. You will be given a spare dressing to take home with you. If you are unable to or do not feel happy to change the dressing yourself then contact your GP surgery to arrange a district nurse to visit, or to go and see the practice nurse at the surgery.

If you have no stitches or staples to be removed, you may leave your dressing off after five days, otherwise keep it covered until they have been removed.

# Infection

Signs of infection in the wound may be:

- ☐ Redness and swelling around the wound area
- ☐ A cloudy coloured leakage from the wound
- ☐ A smelly leakage from the wound
- ☐ You feel generally unwell
- ☐ Increased pain

Seek advice from your GP or renal unit as soon as possible if you think you may have an infection, as you could need antibiotic treatment.

# Pain

You may have some pain or discomfort over the wound area for a few days. Paracetamol is safe to take in renal failure as long as you follow the instructions on the packet. If you are allergic to paracetamol, or have been previously advised not to take it, please seek medical advice for pain relief.

## **Bruising**

Some bruising is normal after the operation, which could take up to two weeks to resolve. Circulation problems  
Your hand may be cooler after the operation. If your hand becomes very cold or numb, contact your GP, your renal unit, or the renal specialist nurse for advice.

## **Abnormal sensation**

Some people experience some altered sensation, such as numbness or tingling, particular over the thumb if your fistula is at your wrist. This usually wears off after a couple of weeks, although can last longer in some people. If you are worried, contact your GP, your renal unit, or the renal specialist nurse for advice.

## **Swelling**

Your arm and hand may become a little swollen after the operation, particularly following the insertion of a graft. Try to avoid your arm hanging by your side for long periods. Rest your arm on a cushion or pillow when sitting down. Try to wiggle your fingers from time to time to reduce swelling and prevent stiffness. If the swelling becomes worse and you are worried, contact your GP, your renal unit, or the renal specialist nurse for advice

## **How will I know if my fistula is working?**

A successful fistula has a fast flow of blood from the artery into the vein. This can be heard through a stethoscope as a 'whooshing' noise or felt as a 'buzzing' sensation. The nurse will check your fistula after the operation to see if it is working. You will be shown how to do this. When your fistula is new, check it at least twice daily. After a few weeks, it should be checked at least once a day.

If you cannot hear or feel the blood flow, or it seems weaker please contact the renal unit or your specialist nurse for advice. See the contact numbers on the back page of this leaflet.

## **How will I know if my graft is working?**

The flow of blood through the graft should be checked by listening through a stethoscope. The renal unit or your renal specialist nurse will provide this.

If you cannot hear or feel the blood flow, or it seems weaker please contact the renal unit or specialist nurse for advice, see contact numbers on the back page of this booklet.

# Care of your fistula or graft after the operation

- Keep your fistula or graft limb warm in cold weather.
- Never let anyone take blood, put up a drip, insert a needle or take your blood pressure on your fistula or graft arm.
- Don't wear tight clothing, a wristwatch or tight jewellery on your limb – this could restrict blood flow and damage your fistula or graft.
- Do not pick scabs on your access arm or leg.
- Do not have a tattoo put on your access arm or leg.
- Try to avoid sleeping on your access arm.

## Follow up

The renal team will monitor the development of your access after surgery. If you are on dialysis already, your renal unit will monitor the wound and development of your access.

If you are not yet on dialysis, the renal specialist nurse will contact you within two weeks of your operation to see how things are and arrange to see you either at home or in the hospital.



## **Exercises to help your fistula to develop**

If you have a fistula there are some simple exercises you can do that may help it develop. The renal specialist or dialysis nurse will explain these to you and tell you when you should start them. This is usually when the operation wound has fully healed, normally after two weeks. They are quite simple and can be done sitting down, for example while reading a book or watching television.

Hold a soft ball, a sponge or rolled up pair of socks in your hand and let your arm hang down. Squeeze the ball 20 times and relax. Repeat this four or five times, every-day if you can.

These exercises should be non-strenuous, however if you have any concerns, please consult a doctor before doing them.

If you have a graft, there is no need to do these exercises.

## **Who should I contact if I have any questions or concerns?**

**If you are already on dialysis please contact your own haemodialysis unit on the numbers listed below:**

York Renal Haemodialysis Unit      Tel: 01904 725370  
Open Monday to Saturday, 7am until 11pm

Easingwold Renal Satellite Unit      Tel: 01904 724800  
Open Monday to Saturday, 7am until 7pm

Harrogate Renal Satellite Unit      Tel: 01423 554519  
Open Monday to Saturday, 7am until 11pm

Scarborough Renal Unit      Tel: 01723 357810  
Open Monday to Saturday, 7am until 7pm

Out of hours, contact Ward 33 York Hospital  
Tel: 01904 726033

**If you are not yet on dialysis, please contact:**

York Renal Haemodialysis Unit      Tel: 01904 725370  
Open Monday to Saturday, 7am until 11pm

Renal Specialist Nurse      Tel: 01904 725486 or  
Monday – Friday      01904 721852

Out of hours, contact Ward 33      Tel: 01904 726033

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact Carl Taylor, Renal Specialist Nurse, Renal Unit, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 721852.

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:

[www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/](http://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/)

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