

# Looking After Your Veins

Information for patients, relatives and carers

ⓘ For more information, please contact:

For more information on vein preservation please talk to  
the health care professional taking care of your  
treatment

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# **Please take time to read this leaflet**

If you have kidney disease there is a strong possibility that you may need dialysis in the future.

Looking after your blood vessels now will help us provide you with a better access for dialysis.

**Haemodialysis** is one type of dialysis and is best performed by using a **fistula**.

## **What is a Fistula?**

To create a fistula an operation is needed to join two of your own blood vessels together. One vessel is an artery and the other is a nearby vein with a larger blood flow going through it. If your veins are damaged or unhealthy, a fistula may not work.

# How do I keep my veins healthy?

Blood vessels can be damaged in a couple of ways:

- While using needles during blood tests
- While using needles during a drip for intravenous treatments

In order to keep veins as healthy as possible you need to try and **avoid** or **minimise** the above, we call this **vein preservation**.

**In order for you to practise vein preservation you need to:**

- Whenever you are being treated in hospital or a surgery, inform the clinician that you are a kidney patient and therefore need to ensure your veins remain as healthy as possible.
- If a blood test or drip is necessary, ask the health staff to try the veins on the back of your hands as these are not used for fistulas. Ensure that any blood tests or drips are really necessary.
- As much as possible, try to have all your tests taken together rather than in different clinics with different people.

- If it is not possible to use the veins on the back of the hands, offer your dominant arm (i.e. right if you are righthanded) for tests and drips. The veins in your other arm will therefore be preserved for a fistula if necessary in the future.
- Do not hesitate to ask for advice and help.

## **What to do if you are having peritoneal dialysis or a kidney transplant**

It is still possible that someday you will still need your arm veins for a fistula. We still advise you to practise vein preservation if you have had or having one of the above treatments.

## **What to do if you are already on haemodialysis**

Being on haemodialysis makes taking blood easier as blood samples can be taken from the machine during your session without using needles in your vein.

If you are using a line in your neck for haemodialysis at present you will need to be assessed for a fistula. Please ask your nurse/doctor regarding this. If you already have a fistula, then it is still possible you will need another one in the future. Vein preservation is important during all the above treatments.

# **Summary**

- Have blood tests and drips through the back of your hand whenever possible
- Ask if all your bloods can be taken at the same time and keep one arm free from needles.

## **Contact us**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Carl Taylor  
Renal Access Nurse

York Hospital  
Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

Telephone: 01904 721852

Monday-Friday, 8am to 4pm

Email: [c.taylor27@nhs.net](mailto:c.taylor27@nhs.net)

## Acknowledgements

With many thanks to Cardiff and Vale University health Board for giving us permission to use the text of their leaflet

## **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, telephone 01904 72 1852

## **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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