Information for patients following insertion of a haemodialysis line

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Introduction

This leaflet has been written to give you information about what to expect after you’ve had a haemodialysis line inserted, explains the ongoing care of your line and gives advice on how you can help to protect it.

If you have any questions about your haemodialysis line please talk to your kidney doctor or one of the dialysis nurses.

Before having insertion of your line

You will be asked to shower and wash your hair with an antimicrobial liquid soap. This will help prevent any germs that may be living on your skin from infecting your new dialysis line.

After insertion of your line

When the local anaesthetic wears off, the area around the exit site may be a little sore and bruised. Take your normal painkillers (paracetamol for example) to take away the discomfort.

The nurses will clean your exit site with special cleaning solutions to reduce the risk of infections. Generally these are chlorhexidine based and you should let them know if you are allergic to this, when an alternative will be used. For about the first two weeks, the exit site, until it has healed, will be covered with an antimicrobial patch to prevent any germs from entering through the wound. The whole exit site will then be covered with a clear protective dressing. It is important that you keep the exit site dry.

You will need to have the stitches removed by a nurse at your dialysis unit after 7–10 days.

If your line starts to bleed, press a clean towel or handkerchief over the site and contact the Renal Assessment Unit at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The team can be contacted 7 days a
week between the hours of 08:00–20:00 Monday–Friday and between 08:00–16:00 at weekends. Outside these hours contact the on–call renal registrar at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (see contact numbers at the end of the leaflet).

**How to protect your haemodialysis line**

It is important that your line is kept free from germs at all times. To reduce the risk of infections we use special protective dressings to cover the exit site and sterile gauze to wrap the line ends as well as putting an antibacterial solution into the line itself. Keep the protective dressing on at all times and do not remove it. The dialysis nurses will look after the dressing when you attend dialysis.

It is very important that your exit site and dressing stay dry at all times. Taking a bath rather than a shower is often found easier to ensure the dressing does not become wet. If the dressing does become wet, pat the area around the line dry with a clean towel. You will need to re–wrap the line ends (called lumens) with sterile gauze as shown by your dialysis nurse and if your exit site dressing does become wet, this will require changing.

Never remove the bungs from ends of your line.

Do not pull or tug your line.

Please remind anyone who uses your haemodialysis line to clean their hands and put on a pair of clean gloves before handling it. Staff will not mind being reminded about the importance of hand washing.
What are the signs of infection?
The following signs may indicate an infection:

- feeling hot and having a temperature above normal
- feeling shivery, shaky and generally unwell
- redness, swelling or oozing around the line
- pain or discomfort

If you notice that your skin around your line is red, swollen or painful, or you see it oozing please tell a nurse at your dialysis unit.

If you become unwell with a high temperature, shivers and shakes this may be a sign of a severe infection and you must contact the Renal Assessment Unit immediately. If it is outside the team’s opening hours (08:00–20:00 Monday–Friday and 08:00–16:00 at weekends) then contact the on-call renal registrar at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

When will my dressing be changed?
The protective dressings can remain in place for up to 7 days. Each time you come for your dialysis session a nurse will take your temperature and inspect the area around the exit site for any signs of infection. The exit site will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution and the protective dressings changed weekly. The nurse will record the date the dressing is changed on edge of the dressing.

The dressing may need to be replaced more frequently if it has become loose, dirty, wet or dislodged.

If for any reason your exit site is bleeding or oozing, it is very important that you contact the RAU team straight away.
What if...

The haemodialysis line breaks?
In the unlikely event that your line cracks or breaks, clamp, pinch or tie your line immediately above the break and contact the Renal Assessment Unit or the on–call renal registrar. You will need to come into hospital to have the line repaired or a new line inserted.

The haemodialysis line falls out?
Lie down and apply firm pressure over the exit site for 5–10 minutes to stop any bleeding. Contact the Renal Assessment Unit or the on–call renal registrar. You will need to come into hospital to have a new line inserted.

When will the line be removed?
Your line will be removed for the following reasons:

• no longer required
• you have a working fistula. As soon as your fistula has been used without any problems for 3–4 dialysis sessions in a row, plans will be made to remove your line
• line is blocked or not working
• infection

For more information please see the separate information leaflet on having your haemodialysis line removed.
*Special instructions*

Your haemodialysis line should only be used for dialysis treatment. If your dialysis line does not work properly it may be necessary for staff at the dialysis unit to place a medicine called Urokinase directly into your line to improve the blood flow. A separate information leaflet about Urokinase is available.

If a doctor or nurse wishes to use the line for any other purpose then please refer them to your kidney nurse or doctor.

Contact details if you have a problem after you go home

Renal Assessment Unit
Telephone: 0121 371 3017/3024

The Renal Assessment Unit is available 08.00–20.00 Monday–Friday, 08.00–16.00 Saturday and Sunday.

Outside of these hours the on-call renal registrar can be contacted by ringing the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham switchboard on 0121 627 2000.

Where can I find further sources of information?
Further information can be obtained from:

The National Kidney Federation
www.kidney.org.uk

NHS Choices
www.nhs.uk
References

• Saving Lives – High Impact Intervention No. 3 Renal Dialysis Catheter Care Bundle

• Safer Practice in Renal Medicine: A resource for reducing healthcare associated infections such as MRSA

• The Health and Social Care Act 2008: Code of Practice for health and social care on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance
The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit www.uhb.nhs.uk or call 0121 627 7803

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Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston
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