

Having your haemodialysis line removed

Introduction

This leaflet has been written to give you information about having your tunnelled haemodialysis line removed.

Why is the line being removed?

There are many reasons for removing a haemodialysis line. These can include:

- Your fistula has been successfully needled on 3–4 occasions in a row.
- Infection of your line
- Your line is blocked and is no longer working.
- Your line is no longer needed.

Your kidney doctor or nurse will give you an appointment to come in as an out-patient to have your line removed.

Where will the line be removed and is there any special preparation?

Haemodialysis lines are normally removed in 301 procedure room at QEH or Ward 3 procedure room at BHH by one of the kidney doctors.

The line will be removed under local anaesthetic so you will stay awake, and the procedure normally takes about 20–30 minutes.

You can drink normally before the procedure and have a light meal.

If you take Warfarin to thin your blood it may need to be stopped before your line is removed to prevent bleeding. A special blood test will be taken to check that your blood is clotting properly before the procedure. If you take clopidogrel, you should check with your kidney doctor whether this needs to be stopped before your line is removed.

How is the line removed?

As the haemodialysis line is tunnelled under the skin the line cannot just be pulled out and will need to be gently released. The skin around the area will be cleaned and a small amount of local anaesthetic injected into the area to make it numb (so it does not hurt). The injection will sting a little but will soon make the skin become numb. The doctor will then be able to make a small cut in your skin. This will allow the doctor to loosen the line from under the skin. You may feel a little bit of pressure, but it should not hurt. When the line has been loosened the line should be able to come out easily.

The doctor will remove the line whilst you are breathing out and may ask you to hold your breath. The doctor and nurse will explain exactly what they want you to do.

As the line is removed gentle pressure will be placed over the site where you had the line going into your skin for about 5 minutes. A couple of stitches are normally put into the skin and a dressing is placed over the wound.

If there is bleeding after the procedure, you may be asked to remain on the bed for a time and have your blood pressure and pulse taken.

If there is no bleeding and your blood pressure and pulse are stable, you will be able to go home. What should I look out for after my line has been removed?

Information for Patients

You will need to check for:

- **Bleeding** – it is normal for there to be a small amount of bleeding onto the dressing. However, if the dressing becomes full of blood, apply pressure over the dressing and contact your nurse or doctor. If the bleeding does not stop, contact your local hospital Emergency Department or call 999.
- **Soreness** – when the local anaesthetic wears off you may experience some discomfort. Take your normal painkillers (paracetamol for example) to take away the discomfort.
- **Swelling** – it is normal for there to be slight swelling around the area. If the swelling is getting bigger, please contact your nurse or doctor.
- **Discharge** – If you are experiencing some discharge on the dressing, the site looks red, or you have a temperature please contact your nurse or doctor.

You should only take shallow baths to avoid 'dirty' water and reduce the risks of getting an infection. Showering with clean flowing water is preferred until the stitches have been removed. If the dressing becomes wet, then it should be replaced.

Once the stitches have been removed you can bathe normally, and a dressing is not needed.

When will the stitches come out?

When you go home you will need to keep your dressing clean and dry. The stitches should be removed after 10–14 days. If you are on dialysis, then one of the nurses should be able to remove the stitches when you come to the unit. Otherwise, you will need to book an appointment with the practice nurse at your GP surgery.

What if my line can't be removed?

Very occasionally a haemodialysis line may become stuck to the blood vessel wall and the line can't be removed under local anaesthetic. If this happens your kidney doctor will discuss the next steps with you. Your line may need to be removed with the help of the X-ray doctors or even under general anaesthetic (while you are asleep).

Where can I find further sources of information?

Further information can be obtained from:

The National Kidney Federation website: www.kidney.org.uk

Kidney Care UK website: www.kidneycareuk.org

NHS Choices website: www.nhs.uk

Contact details if you have a problem after you go home

Renal Assessment Unit (QEH) Tel: **0121 371 3017 or 0121 371 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 the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham switchboard on **0121 371 2000**.

Ward 3 (BHH) Tel: **0121 424 0203 – 24 hours**

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk.