

Transcript

If you have kidney failure, you may need hemodialysis to clean your blood. In order to access your bloodstream for your regular treatments, your healthcare provider may recommend you get a central venous catheter. A central venous catheter may also be called a central line, a tunneled catheter or a CVC.

A CVC is usually only used for a short time while you wait for a safer, permanent way to access your bloodstream. Safer options include fistula or graft access and should be your goal for long-term hemodialysis treatment.

A CVC is a very thin, flexible tube called a catheter. It travels through a small insertion in your neck or upper chest, under your skin, to a large blood vessel ending just above your heart.

During hemodialysis, blood moves through the catheter, out of your body and to an artificial kidney. There, your blood is cleaned, toxins and fluids are removed, and then the clean blood is returned back to your body through the catheter.

On the outside of your chest you will be able to see two openings called "lumens". When having hemodialysis, your blood will come out of your body through 1 lumen and go back into your body through the other. When you aren't having your treatment, a sterile cap covers each lumen to prevent infection and a clamp on each lumen can open the tube for treatment or close the tube when it is not in use to prevent infection or blood loss. A clean dressing covers the catheter where it enters your body, further protecting you from infection.

To insert the catheter, a trained member of your healthcare team may use an X-ray or ultrasound machine to guide the catheter through a vein in your upper chest or neck. When your catheter is first inserted you may feel some discomfort. Your healthcare provider may recommend you take pain medications for a short time to relieve any discomfort.

Because you may have an increased risk of infection with a catheter, it is very important to follow all of your healthcare provider's instructions when caring for it. Don't be afraid to ask questions. They are there to help.