

Transcript

When your kidneys can no longer do the job of cleaning your blood, you may need hemodialysis. An arteriovenous graft, or AV graft, can give your healthcare provider safe access to your blood vessels for many years, if it is kept infection-free and in good working order. To ensure it stays working safely, here are some things to keep in mind.

Keep your graft area clean at all times. Do not cut or bump the area. Do not wear jewelry or tight clothing over the area. If your access site is in your arm, don't use that arm to lift heavy objects. Try not to sleep on that arm. And do not let anyone put a blood pressure cuff on your access arm.

Access sites should only be used for hemodialysis, not regular blood draws. And let all of your healthcare providers, including your dentist, know you have a graft before any appointments.

Every day, check for signs of infection. If you notice redness, warmth, tenderness or pus; or if you have a fever, contact your healthcare provider right away.

If it looks like your graft area is swollen, or like there is a balloon under the surface of the skin, tell your healthcare provider immediately. You may have an aneurysm that will need to be monitored or treated.

And every day, check the "thrill" in your access area. "Thrill" is a vibration you will be able to feel over your access site. Ask your healthcare provider to help you check the thrill so you know how to do it on a regular basis.

AV grafts can develop narrow areas which can make dialysis difficult and may lead to a blood clot forming. Called stenosis, this narrow area may be able to be treated with a minimally invasive procedure.

As you live with your graft, take good care of it to prevent complications and infection. It is your life-line. Do all you can to protect it.

If you have any questions about how to care for your access site and the steps you can take to prevent complications, talk to your healthcare provider.