

Accessing Your Graft for Hemodialysis

An Arteriovenous Graft is one safe, permanent way for your healthcare team to access your bloodstream for Hemodialysis.

Whenever your Graft is being accessed, your healthcare provider will follow specific steps to prevent infection and other complications. Accessing your Graft should only be done in a clean area by a trained healthcare provider.

Anybody coming into contact with your Graft area must wash their hands thoroughly using soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. This includes you and your healthcare provider.

Your healthcare provider will wear a protective face shield, mask and gloves.

Before starting your hemodialysis session, your healthcare provider will check the “thrill” of your graft site. To do this, she will feel your graft area for vibrations. And using a stethoscope, she will listen for a swoosh sound which means blood is flowing through the graft well.

Your blood pressure and heart rate will also be checked using the opposite arm.

And before your graft area is accessed, you will need to put on a mask.

To access your graft, your healthcare provider will first clean the area to prevent infection.

Always let the area air dry. Do not fan or blow on the site to speed things up. This will only increase your risk for infection.

Next, your healthcare provider will insert 2 needles into your Graft area and tape them down so they don't move around.

Each needle is attached to a small, flexible tube that connects to an artificial kidney machine. Blood is taken out of your body through one tube and sent to the machine to be cleaned. The toxins and excess fluids are removed. And then the clean blood is returned back to your body through the other tube.

Depending on your health and the amount of toxins in your blood, your hemodialysis session may take several hours to clean your blood.

Your blood pressure and heart rate will be checked several times during your treatment session to make sure your blood pressure does not drop too low. This is a common side effect during hemodialysis. Tell your healthcare provider if you feel nauseous or dizzy during your treatment session.

When your Hemodialysis treatment session is over, your healthcare provider will remove the needles one at a time, and put a dressing on the site. You may need to put pressure on the dressings for a few minutes to stop any bleeding.

And finally, your blood pressure and heart rate will be checked once again to make sure it is safe for you to leave. If you have any questions about what will happen each time your graft is accessed during your hemodialysis session, talk to your healthcare provider.