

Hemodialysis Access: When Is the Right Time?

It can be hard to think that someday a machine may have to do the work your kidneys won't be able to do anymore.

But that's okay.

A lot of people feel that way before they start dialysis. Before dialysis can start, you'll need a dialysis access.

That's where planning can help. When you have a plan, you can be more in control.

One of the first things to think about is when to get your access.

A vascular access is the place on your arm where the blood and fluids will flow in and out of your body during dialysis.

There are two kinds of accesses: a graft or a fistula. The graft uses a tube to connect an artery and a vein.

A graft may seem like the simplest to do and the quickest to use.

A fistula can be stronger than a graft, and there may be less risk of an infection.

A doctor creates a fistula by attaching the artery directly to a vein.

The procedure to make a fistula must be done several months before you start doing dialysis.

That's because it needs time to heal and get strong enough to be your lifeline.

It's also important to know that not everyone can receive a fistula. It depends on a few things including the size of the vein and the artery. You and your doctor can discuss your options.

When you start dialysis will depend on the health of your kidneys.

Work with your doctor to decide what is right for you - a graft or fistula.

Remember, you can always ask your care team questions and let them help you make a plan that puts you in control of your health.