

TAKING CARE OF YOUR VASCULAR ACCESS FOR HEMODIALYSIS

You have a vascular access for hemodialysis. Taking good care of your access helps make it last longer.

Follow your health care provider's instructions on how to care for your access at home. Use the information below as a reminder.

What Is a Vascular Access?

A vascular access is an opening made in your skin and blood vessel during a short operation. When you have dialysis, your blood flows out of the access into the hemodialysis machine. After your blood is filtered in the machine, it flows back through the access into your body.

Know What Type of Vascular Access You Have

There are 3 main types of vascular accesses for hemodialysis:

Fistula: An artery in your forearm or upper arm is sewn to a vein nearby. This allows needles to be inserted into the vein for dialysis treatment. A fistula takes from 4 to 6 weeks to heal and mature before it is ready to use.

Graft: An artery and a vein in your arm are joined by a U-shaped plastic tube under the skin. Needles are inserted into the graft when you have a dialysis. A graft can be ready to use in 2 to 4 weeks.

Central venous catheter: A soft plastic tube (catheter) is tunneled under your skin and placed in a vein in your neck, chest, or groin. From there, the tubing goes into a central vein that leads to your heart. A central venous catheter is ready to use right away. It is usually used only for a few weeks or months.

When You First Leave the Hospital

You may have a little redness or swelling around your access site for the first few days. If you have a fistula or graft:

- Prop your arm on pillows and keep your elbow straight to reduce swelling.
- You can use your arm after you get home from surgery. But, do not lift more than 10 lbs or 4.5 kg which is the weight of a gallon of milk.

Taking care of the dressing (bandage):

- If you have a graft or fistula, keep the dressing dry for the first two days. You can bathe or shower as usual after the dressing is removed.
- If you have a central venous catheter, you must keep the dressing dry at all times. Do not take baths, go swimming, or soak in a hot tub. Do not let anyone draw blood from your catheter.

Problems to Watch For

Grafts and catheters are more likely than fistulas to become infected. Signs of infection are redness, swell-

ing, soreness, pain, warmth, pus around the site, and fever. Blood clots may form and block the flow of blood through the access site. Grafts and catheters are more likely than fistulas to clot. The blood vessels in your graft or fistula can become narrow and slow down the flow of blood through the access. This is called stenosis.

When to Call the Doctor

Contact your provider right away if you notice any of these problems:

- Bleeding from your vascular access site
- Signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, soreness, pain, warmth, or pus around the site
- A fever 100.3°F (38.0°C) or higher
- The flow (thrill) in your graft or fistula slows down or you do not feel it at all
- The arm where your catheter is placed swells and the hand on that side feels cold
- Your hand gets cold, numb or weak

Day-to-day Care of Your Vascular Access

Following these guidelines will help you avoid infection, blood clots, and other problems with your vascular access.

- Always wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after touching your access. Clean the area around the access with antibacterial soap or rubbing alcohol before your dialysis treatments.
- Check the flow in your access every day. The flow creates a mild vibration in the access, also called thrill. Your provider will show you how.
- Change where the needle goes into your fistula or graft for each dialysis treatment.
- Do not let anyone take your blood pressure, start an IV (intravenous line), or draw blood from your access arm.
- Do not let anyone draw blood from your tunneled central venous catheter.
- Do not sleep on your access arm.
- Do not carry more than 10 lb (4.5 kg) with your access arm.
- Do not wear a watch, jewelry, or tight clothes over your access site.
- Be careful not to bump or cut your access.
- Use your access only for dialysis.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR PERITONEAL DIALYSIS (PD) CATHETER

The National Kidney Foundation says taking good care of the PD catheter and the skin around it (called the exit site) is the most important way to keep the catheter working well and to lower the chance for infection.

Right After Your Catheter is Placed

After the catheter is placed, a sterile gauze bandage is usually taped over the exit site to stop the catheter from moving and to keep the area clean. For the first 7 to 10 days, the exit site is usually left alone. After that, the bandage is first changed by a PD nurse under sterile conditions. The catheter should not be moved or touched a lot, because this can increase the chance for infection.

After the first two weeks, the skin around the catheter should not be red or painful. The skin should feel soft. There may be a small amount of thick, yellow mucus. A crust or scab may form every few days. If the skin is red, painful, feels hard, or there is pus around the catheter, there may be an infection. Contact your center right away.

The skin around the catheter should be kept dry until it is well healed -- about 10 to 14 days. You should not take a shower or bath or go swimming during this time. These water sources are not sterile and can cause an exit site infection. A washcloth or sponge may be used to clean the body, although you should be careful to keep the catheter and bandage dry. You will be able to shower when cleared by your PD nurse.

While healing, you should not exercise too hard or do much lifting. The exit site should be completely healed at 4-6 weeks.

It is important to prevent constipation after the catheter is placed. Straining to move your bowels can increase the chance for a hernia (a weakness in the belly muscle). Not moving your bowels enough can lead to problems with catheter function (slow drain time or problems with completely draining the belly). To prevent or treat constipation, your health care team may recommend a high

fiber diet along with the right amount of fluid to help you pass stool more easily. They may also order a stool softener or laxative.

Long-Term Care

Your PD nurse will teach you about how to keep your exit site and catheter clean. Keeping this area clean will lower the chance of skin infection, as well as infection inside the belly, called peritonitis (pe-ri-tah-ny-tis). If you get peritonitis, it must be treated right away. If you get peritonitis many times, or if it lasts a long time, then you may need to stop PD and change to hemodialysis.

Most centers will recommend that you keep the catheter in place with tape. If the catheter moves a lot, you can harm the exit site. Do not let clothes tug on your catheter.

The skin around the exit site should be washed every day or every other day with antibacterial soap or cleanser recommended by your center that does not irritate the skin. The soap should stay in the same bottle it came in (not poured into another bottle). Bar soap is not recommended because germs can grow on it. Other types of cleansers, such as hydrogen peroxide or alcohol, should NOT be used unless your healthcare team tells you to do so. These are general guidelines – you center may have some more specific or different instructions:

- Before cleaning the area, always wash your hands with soap and water and put on clean gloves.
- Hold the catheter in place during cleaning to prevent injury to the skin.
- Do not pick or remove crusts or scabs at the exit site.

- Clean with antibacterial soap or cleanser. Rinse with sterile water or saline.
- After cleaning, gently pat the skin dry around the exit site with a clean cloth or towel. Use the cloth or towel only one time and do not use it on other parts of the body.
- Put antibiotic cream on the skin around the catheter with a cotton-tip swab every time the dressing is changed. Your center will order the type of cream they want you to use. This will help prevent infections. Do not use any creams with petroleum because they can damage the catheter.
- The exit site should be covered with sterile gauze, which should be changed every time the site is cleaned. The catheter should be stuck to the skin with special tape that allows the skin to get air. Your PD nurse will tell you which tape to use.

With good exit site care, most PD catheters have no problems and work for many years. If the catheter does not work or is no longer needed, it is removed with minor surgery.



**Follow us on
Facebook & Instagram!
Dialysis Center of Lincoln**

- **Staff and Patient achievements**
- **What Dialysis Events are coming up**
- **What the staff is up to**
- **And much much more!**

SPRING SEASONAL FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: A FRESH BOUNTY OF FLAVOR

As winter's chill retreats, spring brings forth a vibrant array of fresh produce. From tender greens to juicy fruits, the season offers a delightful variety for your table. Let's explore the best spring fruits and vegetables that are about to grace our plates. Adding in seasonal varieties of these fruits and vegetables will add many vitamins, minerals, and sources of fiber for your diet.

Asparagus, with its slender stalks, takes center stage in spring. Rich in vitamins A, C, and K, it pairs beautifully with lemon zest and olive oil. Roast or grill it for a simple yet elegant side dish.

Strawberries burst forth in spring, their sweet juiciness a harbinger of warmer days. Enjoy them fresh, sliced over yogurt, or baked into tarts and shortcakes.

Peas, whether sugar snap, snow, or garden peas, thrive in spring's cool weather. Add them to risottos, salads, or stir-fries for a burst of sweetness.

Radishes, with their peppery crunch, are a springtime delight. Slice them thinly and sprinkle with sea salt for a refreshing snack or add them to salads.

Spinach, a nutrient powerhouse, grows abundantly in spring. Use its tender leaves in salads, omelets, or sautés.

Artichokes, though available year-round, peak in spring. Steam or roast them, then savor each leaf dipped in garlic butter.

Rhubarb, with its tart flavor, is a springtime gem. Stew it with sugar and vanilla for a delightful compote or bake it into pies and crumbles. Various lettuces and leafy greens—such as **arugula**, **butterhead**, and **watercress**—thrive in spring. Create vibrant salads or use them as wraps for fresh fillings.

Carrots, with their earthy sweetness, are at their best in spring. Roast them with honey and herbs or add them to soups and stews.

Fava beans, also known as broad beans, make a brief appearance in spring. Blanch and peel them to reveal their vibrant green color, then toss them into salads or pasta dishes.

Cherries, both sweet and tart varieties, arrive in late spring. Enjoy them as a snack, bake them into pies, or simmer them into compotes.

Green onions, with their mild flavor, add a fresh kick to dishes. Use them in salads, stir-fries, or as a garnish.

Spring's bounty invites us to celebrate the season's freshness. Whether you're shopping at the farmers' market or growing your own, embrace these delightful fruits and vegetables—they're nature's way of saying, "Winter is over, and abundance awaits!" The fruits and vegetables mentioned are generally lower in potassium making them good for a kidney friendly diet. Please ask your dialysis dietitian if you have any questions about what foods are good for a low potassium diet.



CONNECTING LAUGHTER, HUMOR AND GOOD HEALTH

Laughter is the biological reaction of humans to moments, or occasions of humor. It is an outward expression of amusement.

Facts and Figures

- ☺ On average, a child laughs 300 times a day while an adult laughs only 17 times a day.
- ☺ The majority of men report that their laughter is a chuckle, and the majority of women report that theirs is a giggle.
- ☺ Adults between the ages of 18 and 34 report laughing the most.
- ☺ Most laughter does not come from listening to jokes; it comes from spending time with family and friends.
- ☺ People tend to laugh more when in groups. People should surround themselves with others who laugh, because laughter is contagious.
- ☺ Smiling is a mild, silent form of laughing.
- ☺ Babies start to laugh at about four months of age.

Other Interesting Laughter Information

- ☺ Studies from around the world have shown that an atmosphere of humor results in better patient cure, less anesthesia time, less operating time, and shorter hospital stays.
- ☺ Laughter is not confined to humans:
- ☺ Chimpanzees show laughter-like behavior in response to physical contact, such as wrestling, chasing, or tickling; and rat pups emit short, high-frequency, ultrasonic vocalization during rough-and-tumble play and when tickled.
- ☺ Rat pups “laugh” far more than older rats.
- ☺ Laughter can also make you more attractive to your friends, loved ones, and the opposite sex.
- ☺ John Morreall, editor of both *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* and *The International Journal*

for Humor and Health, theorizes that human laughter may help inhibit the fight or flight response, making laughter a behavioral sign of trust in one’s companions.

- ☺ Laughter sounds the same across cultures, leading some researchers to believe that laughter helped bond our ancestors together. In fact, the sound of laughter is so common and familiar that it can be recognized if played backwards on tape.
- ☺ Laughing burns calories. In fact, laughing for 10 minutes each day can burn the same number of calories as a half-hour workout.
- ☺ Laughter can be infectious. It can make others smile and feel happier. We are more likely to remember and want to be around the people who cheer us up and make us laugh.

The Health Benefits of Humor and Laughter

Many people find that maintaining a sense of humor is useful for a good quality of life. Our sense of humor gives us the ability to find delight, experience joy, and release tension. Additionally, laughter activates the chemistry of the will to live and increases our capacity to fight disease, which makes it an effective self-care tool. In 1979, Norman Cousins, MD wrote *Anatomy of Illness*, which brought the subject of humor therapy to the attention of the medical community. In his book, Dr. Cousins

details how he used laughter to help ease his pain while undergoing treatment for an incurable and extremely painful inflammation of his body’s tissues. As a result, scientific evidence on the effectiveness of humor and its health benefits is now overwhelming.

The following are some of the researched benefits of laughter on:

Blood Pressure

People who laugh heartily, on a regular basis, have a lower standing blood pressure than does the average person. When people have a good laugh, initially the blood pressure increases, but then it decreases to levels below normal.

Hormones

Laughter reduces at least four of the neuro-endocrine hormones associated with stress. These are epinephrine, cortisol, dopamine, and growth hormone.

Immune System

Clinical studies by Lee Berk at Loma Linda University have shown that laughter strengthens the immune system by increasing infection-fighting antibodies.

Muscle Relaxation

Belly laughs result in muscle relaxation. While you laugh, the muscles that do not participate in the belly laugh relax. After you finish laughing, those muscles involved in the laughter start to relax. Therefore, the action takes place in two stages.

Continued on next page..



Continued...

CONNECTING LAUGHTER, HUMOR AND GOOD HEALTH

Pain Reduction

Laughter allows a person to “forget” about pains such as those associated with aches, arthritis, etc. In 1987, Texas Tech psychologist Rosemary Cogan used the discomfort of a pressure cuff to test the medical benefits of laughter on pain management. Subjects who watched a 20-minute Lily Tomlin routine could tolerate a tighter cuff than those who had watched an informational tape or no tape at all.

Brain Function

Laughter stimulates both sides of the brain to enhance learning. It eases muscle tension and psychological stress, which keeps the brain alert and allows people to retain more information.

Respiration

Frequent belly laughter empties your lungs of more air than it takes in, resulting in a cleansing effect similar to deep-breathing. This deep breathing sends more oxygen-enriched blood and nutrients throughout the body.

The Heart

Laughter, along with an active sense of humor, may help protect you against a heart attack, according to a study at the University of Maryland Medical Center. The study, which is the first to indicate that laughter may help prevent heart disease, found that people with heart disease were 40 percent less likely to laugh in a variety of situations compared to people of the same age without heart disease.

A Good Workout

Laughter is the equivalent to “internal jogging.” According to William Fry, MD, Professor of Psychiatry at Stanford University, one minute of laughter is equal to ten minutes on

the rowing machine. Laughter can provide good cardiac, abdominal, facial, and back muscle conditioning, especially for those who are unable to perform physical exercise.

Mental and Emotional Health

Humor and laughter are a powerful emotional medicine that can lower stress, dissolve anger, and unite people in troubled times. Mood is elevated by striving to find humor in difficult and frustrating situations. Laughing at ourselves, and the situation we are in, will help reveal that small things are not the earth-shaking events they sometimes seem to be. Looking at a problem from a different perspective can make it seem less formidable for greater objectivity and insight. Humor also helps us avoid loneliness by connecting with others who are attracted to genuine cheerfulness.

Other Benefits

Laughter and humor connect us to other people, foster relationships, rejuvenate and regenerate our energy, and make us feel good!

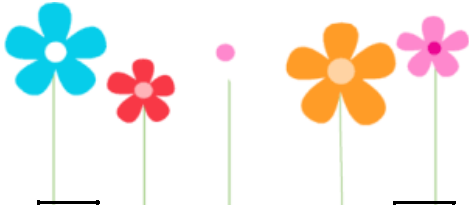
How You Can Expand Your Sense of Humor

Look for everyday humor. Start looking for the absurd, silly activities that go on around you each day.

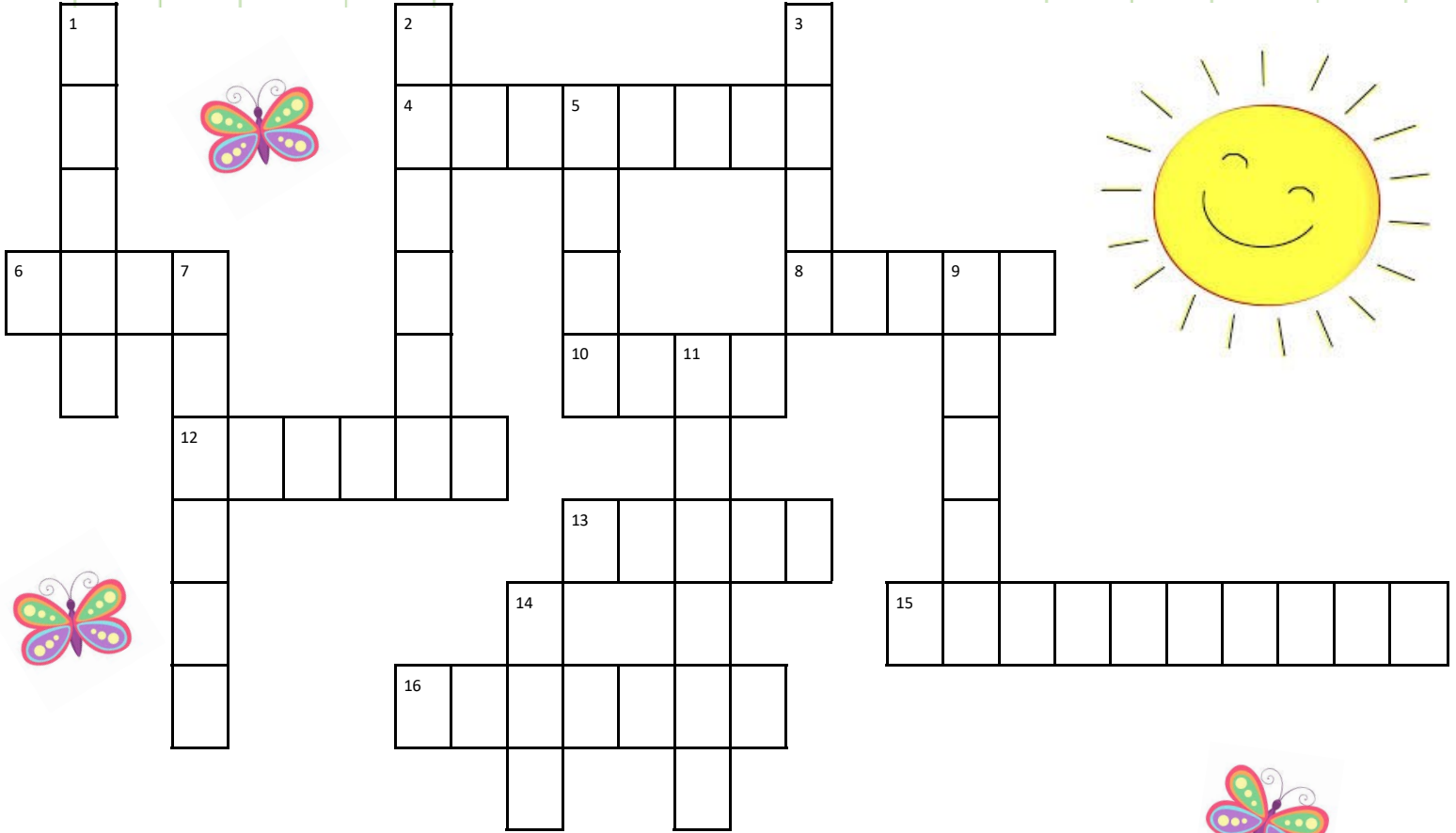
- ☺ Observe infants and young children to learn how to find delight and amusement in the most ordinary things.
- ☺ Increase your exposure to comedies, comic sitcoms, joke books, comedy clubs, etc.
- ☺ Hang around funny friends.
- ☺ Take a 5 to 10 minute humor break each day. Read jokes, add to a humor notebook, and listen to funny tapes.
- ☺ If you hear a joke you really like, write it down or tell it to someone else to help you remember it.
- ☺ Remind yourself to have fun.
- ☺ Spend time with those who help you see the bright side. Whenever possible, avoid negative people.
- ☺ Avoid conversations, news, entertainment, etc., that frightens, upsets or distresses you, or makes you feel sad and unhappy.
- ☺ Be mindful of just “lightening up.”

*Your body cannot heal without play.
Your mind cannot heal without laughter.
Your soul cannot heal without joy.
- Catherine Rippenger Fenwick*





SPRING



ACROSS

- 4. Rain or sun protection
- 6. Flying a _____ is the perfect windy day activity.
- 8. What snow does in Spring
- 10. Where a bird lays eggs
- 12. A brief period of rain
- 13. First month of spring
- 15. A day for playing tricks
- 16. Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter

DOWN

- 1. Fourth month of the year
- 2. A small accumulation of water
- 3. Not cold or hot
- 5. Drops of water that fall from the clouds
- 7. The day kids hunt for eggs
- 9. A spring flower
- 11. The season after winter
- 14. Mother's Day is celebrated this month

