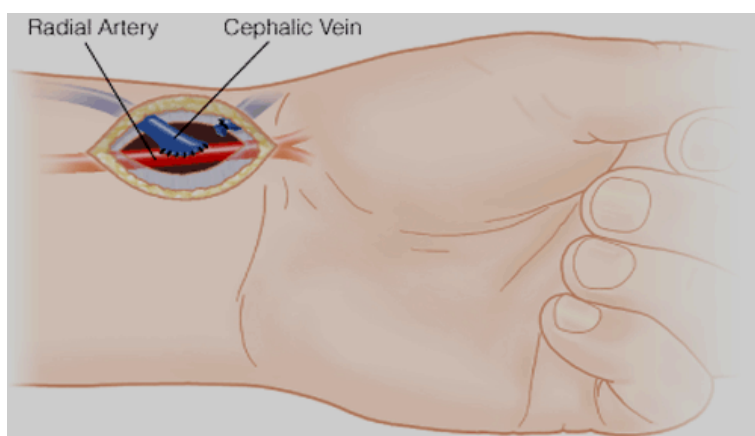


## Care of fistula / graft: information for care home staff

A fistula (arteriovenous fistula) or graft is a patient's life-line for dialysis and it must be looked after with care. The fistula may be at the level of the wrist as shown in the picture below or it may have been placed at the elbow.

We hope you find this information helpful and if any you have any concerns (however small) please feel free to contact us.

**If the fistula or graft is bleeding, apply direct pressure with a sterile dressing. If it fails to stop after 20 minutes, is bleeding very profusely or the patient becomes unwell, call 999. A fistula or graft bleed is an arterial bleed so must be treated as an emergency.**



### Day to day care of an AVF

- The fistula or graft has a bruit or thrill (feels as though it is 'buzzing') which indicates it is working. **This must be checked by touch every shift please.** If the bruit feels less powerful or absent, please call the unit / ward immediately.
- Renal patients are more prone to infections and therefore if any area of the fistula or graft appears infected, red, and painful or has scabbed oozing areas, the patient must be assessed by a renal doctor.
- During hot weather, the patient is more at risk from dehydration, especially if they are on a fluid restriction. The fistula/graft must be monitored strictly during this time. Dehydration / a drop in blood pressure can cause the fistula to stop. Please call the unit / ward for advice without delay.
- Blood pressure, venepuncture and cannulation must be avoided on the fistula/graft arm.

- Restrictive, tight clothing, tight bracelets and wrist watches should not be used on the AVF arm.
- It is helpful to our dialysis team if, when a patient comes for dialysis, they are wearing loose clothing on their top half to enable us to easily access and clean their arm for dialysis.
- If you notice anything unusual about the AVF (redness / swelling / pain) please contact us on the numbers below.

If you have a problem or concern please call your local unit on the numbers below or the Renal Vascular Access Nurse on 0118 322 8526. If the unit is closed please call Victoria Ward directly for advice.

Renal Vascular Access Nurse	0118 322 8526
Benyon Unit	0118 322 8360
Bracknell Dialysis Unit	01344 662961
Huntley & Palmer Unit	0118 322 8518
Windsor Dialysis Unit	01753 866008
Victoria Ward	0118 322 7476

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust  
London Road  
Reading RG1 5AN  
0118 322 5111 (switchboard)  
[www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

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