

# Caring for your haemodialysis line

**This leaflet explains how to care for your haemodialysis line. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.**

## What is a haemodialysis line?

A haemodialysis line is a flexible tube, with two openings used for haemodialysis. One opening takes your blood to the dialysis machine to be cleaned, whilst the other returns the cleaned blood to your body. The tube is inserted into one of the veins in the neck or groin. It is held securely in place by a cuff under the skin.

The haemodialysis line is often a temporary solution until you and your doctors have planned a more permanent form of dialysis, for example, a fistula for haemodialysis, or a peritoneal dialysis catheter for peritoneal dialysis.

## Looking after your dialysis line

It is important to take care of your line to prevent infections and help the line last longer. Here are some important steps to take:

- Keep your dressing clean and dry.
- If your dressing gets wet or dirty, wash your hands thoroughly and put on a clean dressing. Your haemodialysis nurses will usually change your dressing weekly. If it looks dirty, or feels uncomfortable, the nurses will change it more often – please let them know if you have changed your own dressing.
- Keep showers short and try to keep your dressing dry – bacteria (germs) thrive in warm, moist environments.
- You may shower once the skin around the haemodialysis line has healed. This usually takes about 14 days, but please check with your haemodialysis team before getting the line wet or showering for the first time. Protective pouches are available. These will protect the line while you shower. Please ask the nurses if you would like to try the pouches.
- **Do not** use talcum powder and creams around the haemodialysis line.
- **Do not** pull/kink the haemodialysis line.
- Ensure that the clamps and caps remain closed at all times when your dialysis line is not being used for dialysis. Tell your dialysis team if the area around the dialysis line feels sore, looks red or inflamed, or if you notice any discharge.
- Only a trained haemodialysis team should use your dialysis line.
- Your haemodialysis line should not be used for any purpose other than dialysis.

## How to recognise infection

Please contact the renal department if you experience any of the following symptoms (contact numbers are at the end of this leaflet):

- Redness, swelling or new pain around the haemodialysis line or site
- Oozing or bleeding from the area around the haemodialysis line
- Fever and chills
- Feeling generally unwell
- The clamps/caps breaking or falling off
- A tear or hole in the dialysis line

These symptoms may indicate line infection and can be treated with antibiotics but may also require the line to be removed as an emergency.

## What should I do if I am no longer using the dialysis line?

If the line is not being used you will still require a weekly dressing change and cleaning of your exit site. Your line will also need a weekly flush and changes of anticoagulant (a medicine to stop the blood from clotting). Your vascular access nurses or dialysis unit will arrange this.

If you no longer need dialysis, or you are having haemodialysis through the fistula with no problems, the dialysis nurse will arrange removal of your line.

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about dialysis line insertion, please contact the vascular access clinical nurse specialist on **020 7188 7488** or **078 2728 1534** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

Out of hours, please contact **Patience Ward** on **020 7188 8838**.

On the rare occasion that your dialysis line should come out, apply pressure to the exit site (where the line has become dislodged) and **phone 999 immediately**.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

### Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

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