

Vascular access assessment clinic

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about having what happens in the vascular access assessment clinic. If you have any questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is the vascular access assessment clinic?

You will be asked to attend a vascular access assessment if you need to have an arteriovenous (AV) fistula formed.

What will happen at the vascular access assessment clinic?

If you require an AV fistula, you will be seen by a surgeon in the vascular access assessment clinic. They will ask you some questions and look at your arms to assess your veins for creating an AV fistula.

You may also be asked to go for a scan of your arms to work out how deep the veins are and what size/calibre (quality) they are. During most of these clinics we are able to perform this scan in the next room. This means there is no need for you to come back to the hospital for another appointment to have this scan.

What will happen after I have been seen?

Once the scan has been done, the surgeon will review the results with you and make plans for your AV fistula operation.

What is an AV fistula?

A surgeon will perform an operation to join one of your veins to an artery (usually either at the wrist or at the elbow). This will cause more blood to flow through the vein. As a result, the vein grows larger and stronger, making repeated needle insertions for haemodialysis treatments easier.

This operation can be performed with one of three types of anaesthetic:

- 1) Local anaesthetic: you will be awake for the operation. After the anaesthetic has been injected at the site of operation, you will feel some movement but should feel no pain. You should be able to go home the same day.
- 2) Regional anaesthetic: the anaesthetist will inject anaesthetic into your neck or the top of your arm so that you feel no pain in your arm. You will be awake for the operation but will not be able to move your arm for approximately 12 hours. You may be able to go home the same day. You will be given a sling to use until you can move your arm again.
- 3) General anaesthetic: a general anaesthetic is medicine that causes you to be temporarily unconscious (asleep), so you do not feel anything during the procedure. You might find the leaflet, **Having an anaesthetic**, useful. Please ask your doctor or nurse for a copy. You may have to stay in hospital for a night after the operation.

An AV fistula requires advance planning because it will take at least 6-8 weeks for the vein to be large enough to be used for dialysis. About 4-6 weeks after your operation, you will be seen again in the vascular access clinic and have another scan to check that the vein is ready to be used.

Having your fistula formed does not necessarily mean that you will need to start dialysis straight away. This decision will be made jointly with you and your kidney doctor/nurse, depending on your blood results and how you are feeling.

You will receive a leaflet, **Having an arteriovenous fistula (AVF) formed**. This will explain more about the surgery, what to expect when you come in to hospital, and advise you how to take care of your fistula once it has been formed.

Who can attend the vascular access assessment clinic?

You may be referred to the clinic by your kidney doctor/nurse when you both feel it is the right time to have your AV fistula formed.

Where do I need to go?

The clinic is held in the Kidney Clinic, 4th floor, Tower Wing, Guy's Hospital.

What do I need to bring with me?

You do not need to bring anything with you. You can eat and drink as normal before your appointment.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about dialysis line insertion, please contact the vascular access clinical nurse specialist, **t:** 020 7188 7188, extension 7488, **mobile:** 07827 281534 or **Bleep:** 1414, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. To bleep someone, call the hospital switchboard, **t:** 020 7188 7188 and ask for the bleep desk. Ask for bleep 1414 and wait for a response.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** 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, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

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

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