

Infections related to Access Care

If you are a patient on dialysis, you are at risk for infections, such as bloodstream infections. Watch for signs and symptoms of infection and *report them to your doctor immediately.*

Signs and symptoms of infection:



Pain



Site tenderness



Fever



Site drainage (e.g., pus, blood, or foul-smelling discharge)



Fatigue



Scab that does not heal

Patient Infection Prevention



Wash your hands often, especially before and after dialysis treatment.



Check your access daily and notify staff if you notice any signs of infection.



Make sure all staff clean their hands before and after caring for you or your access.

References

Dialysis | National Kidney Foundation:
www.kidney.org/kidney-topics/dialysis

Educational Brochures and Resources – AAKP: <https://aakp.org/center-for-patient-research-and-education/educational-brochures-and-resources/>

Infections and Patients on Dialysis | Dialysis Safety | CDC:
www.cdc.gov/dialysis-safety/about/index.html

Contact

For more information, please visit:

Spice.unc.edu

www.facebook.com/uncspice

www.instagram.com/spice_nc

For questions, please contact:

infectionprevention@dhhs.nc.gov

NC Department of Health and Human Services • Division of Public Health • www.dph.ncdhhs.gov • NCDHHS is an equal opportunity employer and provider. • 12/2025

DIALYSIS SAFETY FOR PATIENTS



Infections and Patients On Dialysis



NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Public Health

North Carolina
SPICE
Statewide Program for
Infection Control & Epidemiology

Overview

Your kidneys play a vital role in cleaning your blood, eliminating waste from your body, and supporting other important functions.

Dialysis is a medical treatment for kidney failure or kidneys that do not work right. Dialysis is not a cure to restore kidney function.

Hemodialysis (HD) is a type of dialysis that uses a dialyzer (filtering machine) to remove waste and extra fluid from your blood and then return the filtered blood into your body. A small operation is needed to create a vein access site.



Infections are common among people receiving dialysis and can be very serious.

Everyone has a role to play in preventing infections and improving dialysis patient safety. You can take action to help prevent infections.

Access Care for Infection Prevention

Fistula or graft:



Wash your access with an antibacterial soap each day and always before dialysis. Do not scratch your skin or pick at a scab.



Ask your dialysis care team to rotate the needles when you have treatment.



Check for redness, a feeling of excess warmth, or the beginning of a pimple on any area of your access.

Catheter:



Keep catheter dressing clean and dry.



Make sure the area of the access is cleaned and the dressing is changed by your care team at each dialysis session.



Keep an emergency dressing kit at home in case you need to change your dressing between treatments.



Never open your catheter to the air.

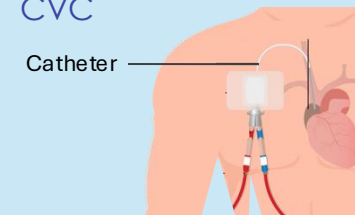
Infection Risk & Terms

Vein access also known as vascular access, moves blood between your body and the dialysis machine during hemodialysis treatments. Types of vein access:

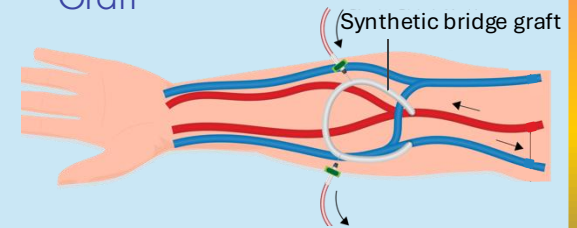
- **Central Venous Catheter (CVC):** A tube inserted into a large vein, often used for short-term access.
- **Arteriovenous (AV) Graft:** A synthetic tube that connects an artery to a vein.
- **Arteriovenous (AV) Fistula:** A connection made between an artery and a vein.

Risk of Bloodstream Infections:

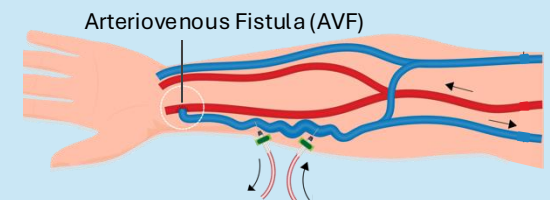
CVC



Graft



Fistula



HIGH RISK

LOW RISK