

# Exercises for your Arterio-Venous Fistula (AVF): before and after surgery



Exercising your fistula arm in the lead up to surgery can have a positive effect on your fistula as it helps it to develop and mature after surgery.

As soon as you know you will need a fistula, start doing these exercises twice a day.

Exercising your fistula arm after surgery may help improve muscle tone and make your vein larger and easier to needle. Your doctor or nurse will tell you when to start the exercises. In most cases, it is about 2 weeks after surgery. A fistula may take up to 6 months to develop.

## Lower and Upper Arm Fistula Exercises

### Ball Squeeze

- Hold a soft ball or rolled wash cloth in your fistula hand.
- Allow your arm to hang down beside your body.



#### Exercise 1

- Slowly squeeze and release the ball in your hand
- Repeat for 10 minutes, 6 times a day.

#### Exercise 2

- Squeeze the ball tightly and hold for 10 seconds, then release.
- Repeat 10 times, 2 times a day

### Clothes peg Grasp

- Using a clothes peg, squeeze open and allow to close
- Repeat for 5 minutes, 6 times a day.



### Fingertip Touches

- Touch each finger to the tip of your thumb, opening up your hand after each touch.
- Repeat for 5 minutes, 6 times a day.



## Upper Arm Fistula Exercises

### Bicep Curl

- While holding a 500g – 2kg weight in your hand rest your elbow and hand on a table. Make sure your hand is facing upward.
- Bending at the elbow, raise your hand towards your shoulder and then lower it back to the starting position. Make sure you keep your elbow on the table during this exercise. Don't bend your wrist.
- Repeat this exercise for 1 minute, 6 times a day.

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## Checking your Fistula

A 'thrill' or 'buzz' is like a vibration caused by blood flowing through your fistula and can be felt by placing your fingers just above your incision line. The "thrill" indicates the fistula is working. Every day check that you can feel a "thrill" over your fistula site. Check your fistula arm for any changes in colour, temperature, tingling, numbness, pain or swelling. Report any changes to the dialysis nurses or Dialysis Access Nurse.

If you cannot feel the 'thrill' or 'buzz' contact the Dialysis Assess Nurse or dialysis nurses

## Contact Details

Business Hours (Monday to Friday 8am to 4:30pm)

Canberra Hospital Dialysis Access Nurse

Ph. (02) 5124 4564

After Hours (4:30pm to 8am)

Go to the Emergency Department if you are worried about your fistula. Show them your alert card. Alert cards tell healthcare staff that you are a renal patient and have a dialysis access. If you don't have an alert card, please ask your nurse.

### Acknowledgement of Country



Canberra Health Services acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. Canberra Health Services respects their continuing culture and connections to the land and the unique contributions they make to the life of this area. Canberra Health Services also acknowledges and welcomes Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples who are part of the community we serve.



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