

Caring for your Haemodialysis Central Venous Catheter



What is a haemodialysis central venous catheter (CVC)?

A haemodialysis CVC is a thin, flexible, plastic tube that is inserted into your vein (blood vessel). Usually the tube is inserted into a vein in your neck, but sometimes other veins are used. The CVC is held securely in place by stitches and a dressing.

Why am I getting a haemodialysis CVC?

Blood tests have shown that your kidneys are not working properly and are not removing waste products from your body.

The CVC is used to take blood from your body and into a machine that filters out the waste products in a process known as haemodialysis. Once the blood has been filtered, it is then returned to your body through the CVC.

How do I look after my haemodialysis CVC?

Your healthcare team will teach you how to look after your CVC. Follow their instructions on how to care for your CVC and use the information below as a reminder.

How do I take care of my haemodialysis CVC dressing?

- Make sure that your CVC dressing is stuck to your skin, covers the CVC and is always clean and dry.
- Have your dressing changed at your haemodialysis unit at least every 7 days. It may need to be changed earlier if the dressing appears visibly dirty or loose (not sticking to your skin).
- Wait for 3 days after the CVC has been inserted until you have a shower. You will need to put a waterproof cover over the CVC dressing when you shower as your dressing must stay dry. If the dressing becomes wet, it will need to be changed as soon as possible by the haemodialysis unit nurses. If the haemodialysis unit is not open, please go to your nearest Emergency Department.
- If you get a fever and/or chills, we suggest you go to the Emergency Department IMMEDIATELY as this may mean that you have an infection.
- Contact your haemodialysis unit as soon as possible if you notice any of the following about your CVC:
 - discomfort or pain
 - redness
 - swelling
 - fluid leaking from where your CVC comes out of your skin
 - the CVC has fallen out or you can see more of the CVC than normal.

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How do I take care of my CVC?

- Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water before touching your CVC and dressing.
- Check your CVC (without removing the dressing) for any damage such as cracks or holes. If this happens please contact your haemodialysis unit as soon as possible.
- Use tape to attach your CVC to your skin to make sure that it doesn't move around easily. If you are allergic to tape, please speak with a nurse in your haemodialysis unit. • Keep your CVC well protected when playing sport by making sure it is covered by clothing and secured with tape to prevent it moving around easily.
- Always ask your healthcare team if you are unsure about caring for your CVC.
- Speak to your team about whether you should have an arteriovenous fistula (AVF) created if you are going to need ongoing haemodialysis.

Don't

- Touch, pull, scratch or pinch your CVC or the CVC dressing.
- Use sharp objects near your CVC.
- Shower, bathe or swim in the first 3 days after your CVC is inserted.
- Go swimming unless your healthcare team says it is safe to do so.
- Let anyone access your CVC for any purpose other than haemodialysis (other than for a major medical emergency).
- Allow anyone to touch your CVC without washing their hands and wearing gloves.
- Place or apply any pressure on your CVC such as carrying or holding an object over it, e.g. a shoulder handbag.

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Contact Details

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

Canberra Hospital Dialysis Access Nurse
Ph. 02 5124 4564

After Hours

Go to the Emergency Department or your nearest health facility if you have a fever and/or chills, or if your CVC insertion site is bleeding.

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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