

# Discharge Instructions

## AV Fistula or Graft Surgery for Dialysis Access

### Activity

- ◆ Do NOT perform any strenuous activity such as yard work, sports, running, pushing or pulling type activities until you return for your follow-up visit. No lifting over 5 lbs (a half gallon of milk) for 2 weeks.
- ◆ No driving for at least one week after the surgery. You may ride in a car. Depending on where the incision is located driving may be difficult for some patients for longer than 1 week. You will have to decide if you have complete range of motion of your arm or leg and be able to turn the steering wheel quickly or extend your leg to brake. This may be longer than 1-2 weeks for some people. You should not drive while taking prescription pain medications.
- ◆ If your fistula or graft is in the arm, an exercise you can do to increase strength is placing a small sponge in your hand and squeezing it 10 times every hour while awake.
- ◆ Do not wear tight jewelry or a watch on the arm where the fistula or graft is located.
- ◆ Do not allow anyone to take a blood pressure or draw blood from the arm where the fistula or graft is located.
- ◆ If you smoke, please quit. Smoking increases your chances of developing heart disease, carotid artery disease, lung cancer, and peripheral artery disease. It can also delay wound healing.

### Personal Hygiene/Shower

- ◆ You may shower on the day after your procedure. Do **NOT** sit down in water for a tub bath, whirlpool, hot tub or swimming pool for 4 weeks or until the incision is completely healed. If you have a dressing in place, keep it dry and leave it in place for 48 hours.
- ◆ After 48 hours, gently wash the incisions with soap and water when you are in the shower. Pat dry with a clean towel. Do **NOT** scrub the incision. Make sure the incision is kept clean and dry. Do **NOT** apply lotion, ointments or creams to the incision.

### Diet

- ◆ You may resume your previous diet when you return home unless otherwise directed.
- ◆ If you have diabetes, keeping your glucose level in good control with help with wound healing.



VascularInstitute  
*NavicentHealth*

## Incision

- ◆ It is normal for there to be some redness, swelling and discomfort for 1-2 weeks after the surgery. There will be a raised ridge along the incision line for several weeks. This is normal.
- ◆ You will likely have staples or sutures. These will be removed when you return to your surgeon's office in 4 weeks.
- ◆ Sometimes an adhesive glue called Dermabond is used to close the incision. There are sutures under the skin. These will dissolve over time. The glue will appear shiny at first and then become sticky, darken and begin to peel away. Do **NOT** scrub the incision, the glue will dissolve and come off in 1-2 weeks after the procedure on its own.
- ◆ If you have a dressing in place when you leave the hospital, it should be removed in 48 hours. If the dressing becomes soiled before 48 hours and needs to be changed, apply gauze and wrap it loosely with gauze wrap or secure with a small amount of tape. These items can be purchased at a drug store.
- ◆ You may have swelling in the arm or leg where the graft is placed. To reduce swelling, elevate the extremity above the level of the heart.

## Pain

- ◆ Mild incisional discomfort does not require prescription pain medication. For mild discomfort you can take over-the-counter pain medications such as Acetaminophen (Tylenol). Take this medication as directed on the package.
- ◆ You will be given a prescription for moderate pain. Take it as directed. Pain medication causes drowsiness and you should not drive while taking prescription pain medication. Do **NOT** take additional Tylenol with prescription pain medication.
- ◆ One of the side effects of pain medications is constipation and nausea. Most people will have nausea if it is taken on an empty stomach. Eat a small snack with pain medication to avoid this side effect. For constipation, you may take Docusate Sodium (Colace) 100 mg, a stool softener, once or twice a day if needed. This can be purchased at any drug store. A laxative may be needed if the constipation continues. Generally, an over the counter laxative, such as Dulcolax tablets, is recommended (take it as directed). If you take one dose of this laxative and your constipation is not relieved, call your nurse practitioner or physician assistant for further instructions.

## Call Your Surgeon for Any of These Symptoms @ (478) 743-9762

- ◆ There is bleeding at the incision that does not stop when pressure is applied.
- ◆ You have chills or a fever over 101 degrees F.
- ◆ The incision has increasing pain, redness, or pus colored drainage.
- ◆ The incision separates.
- ◆ Cold, numb, or painful hand or foot (if you have a thigh graft).

## Follow-up appointment

- ◆ A follow-up appointment will be made for you before you leave the hospital with your surgeon. It will be 4-5 weeks from your surgery date. Make every effort to make this appointment. We will check your incisions for healing and remove sutures if needed.
- ◆ For patients who are currently on dialysis: It will likely be several weeks before your new access site can be used for dialysis. Your surgeon will tell you when it is OK to use it. The Permacath can continue to be used for dialysis.