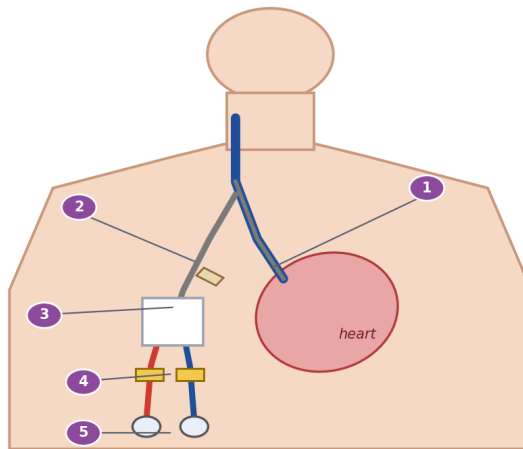


# CATHETER CARE

*Keeping your dialysis catheter clean, dry, and safe*

A catheter is a tube in a large vein that lets dialysis work. It is meant to be **temporary**, and germs can travel along it into the bloodstream. **Follow your own dialysis unit's instructions; they come first.**



## Tunneled dialysis catheter

- 1 Tip rests in a large vein near the heart.
- 2 Cuff under the skin anchors the catheter.
- 3 Exit site: keep the dressing clean, dry, and closed.
- 4 Clamps: keep closed at all times.
- 5 Caps: never remove. Only dialysis staff open them.

*Red and blue ends: blood out and blood back (colors vary). Schematic, not to scale.*

## The five golden rules

|                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Keep it DRY</b></p> <p>No swimming, baths, or hot tubs. Shower only as your unit allows.</p> | <p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Keep it CLOSED</b></p> <p>Clamps shut and caps on, always. Never open or remove them.</p> | <p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>Keep it COVERED</b></p> <p>Leave the dressing on. Only dialysis staff change it.</p> | <p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>Keep it CLEAN</b></p> <p>Wash your hands before touching near the dressing, and keep others' hands off it.</p> | <p><b>5</b></p> <p><b>Keep it SECURE</b></p> <p>No pulling, tugging, or sharp objects. Wear loose, soft clothing.</p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Dressing care

- Your dialysis nurse cleans the site and changes the dressing, usually at each treatment. **Do not change it yourself** unless your unit has trained you to.
- Check the dressing every day. It should be **clean, dry, and stuck down on all edges**.
- If it gets wet, dirty, or loose: cover it with clean, dry gauze and tape, and **call your dialysis unit the same day**. Do not remove the old dressing or touch the skin under it.

## Bathing and daily life

- Wash up with a sponge or washcloth**, keeping the chest dressing dry. Ask your unit if a waterproof shower cover is allowed.
- Sleep on your back or the opposite side. Keep the tubes tucked under a loose shirt so they do not catch.
- Always wear your seat belt. Place a soft pad between the belt and the catheter.
- Avoid contact sports and anything that could pull on the catheter. Keep the tubes tucked under a loose shirt.

# DOS, DON'TS, AND WHEN TO CALL

*Everyday safety and warning signs*

## Do and don't

| DO                                                                                             | DON'T                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ✓ Wash your hands with soap and water before touching anywhere near the catheter.              | ✗ Do not shower, swim, soak, or get the dressing wet.                                  |
| ✓ Wear loose, soft, front-opening tops.                                                        | ✗ Do not open a clamp, remove a cap, or flush the catheter yourself.                   |
| ✓ Tell every nurse and doctor you have a dialysis catheter; only dialysis staff should use it. | ✗ Do not use scissors, pins, or sharp tools near the tubing.                           |
| ✓ Ask whether a fistula or graft is planned for you.                                           | ✗ Do not pull, twist, or tug on the catheter.                                          |
| ✓ Carry your unit's phone number with you at all times.                                        | ✗ Do not let anyone except dialysis-trained staff use it for blood draws or medicines. |

## Call your dialysis unit the same day for

- **Redness, warmth, swelling, tenderness, pus, or bad-smelling drainage** at the exit site or along the tunnel.
- **Fever of 100.4 F (38 C) or higher, or chills** (especially during or after dialysis). This can mean a bloodstream infection; if you cannot reach your unit right away, go to the emergency room.
- A **loose, wet, or dirty dressing**, or a sutured stitch that comes loose.
- **Pain in the neck, chest, or shoulder**, or swelling of the face, neck, or arm on the catheter side.
- A catheter that looks longer, or a cuff you can now see.

### Emergencies: call 911

- **The catheter comes out or is pulled partly out:** press firmly with clean gauze over the exit site and over the vein site at the neck, and keep pressing. Do not push it back in.
- **Heavy bleeding, a cracked or leaking catheter, or a cap that falls off:** clamp or pinch the tube between the damage and your body, cover the open end with clean gauze, sit or lie down, and press on any bleeding.
- **Sudden shortness of breath, chest pain, confusion, or a racing heart,** especially after a cap came off or the catheter was open.

## My catheter information

|                     |       |                    |       |
|---------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
| Type and side       | _____ | Date placed        | _____ |
| Dialysis unit phone | _____ | After-hours number | _____ |
| Doctor or surgeon   | _____ | Next appointment   | _____ |