

## Please always remember

Once your arm is selected for a fistula/graft never allow anyone to:

- take blood pressure
- take blood
- put in a drip or needle of any kind

From the arm selected for the fistula/graft

Place clean fingers over the scar on your Fistula/Graft arm or hand twice daily to check that your fistula/graft is working.

- You should feel a 'buzzing sensation' with your fistula
- When checking your graft you should feel a pulse

If there is no buzzing sensation or pulse seek medical assistance.

## When will the graft/fistula be used?

It usually takes 12-weeks before your fistula is large enough to be used for haemodialysis.

Grafts can be used within 14 days of the surgery or once the swelling has subsided.

## Protecting your fistula arm

- Do not wear any jewellery on your arm (includes watches)
- Do not wear tight clothing
- Do not carry any bags (including grocery bags) on fistula arm
- Try not to sleep on your fistula/graft arm

It is important to organise a medical certificate with your doctor before the surgery if you require one for work or other purposes.

If you have an eligible private health fund, this operation can be done at the private hospital.

## Help and assistance

If you have any concerns or questions please call the Renal Unit on:

**Renal Unit:** (07) 4433 2650

**Renal Access Coordinator:** (07) 4433 3523

The Townsville Hospital  
100 Angus Smith Drive,  
Douglas, QLD 4810

Monday - Friday, 8.00am - 4.30pm

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Townsville  
Hospital  
and Health  
Service



# Surgery for a fistula/graph

A guide for patients and carers who have  
been referred to the Townsville Hospital  
Renal Services



Queensland  
Government

## Why am I having this surgery?

The doctor will have told you that you may need to commence dialysis soon. This is because tests show that your kidneys are not working properly.

You need a safe, convenient way to remove blood from your body to remove fluid and waste products and then return it to you. To be able to do this on a dialysis machine you will need a fistula or graft.

For more information on what an AV fistula or AV graft is please read the brochure 'What is a fistula/graft?'.

## Preparing for your surgery?

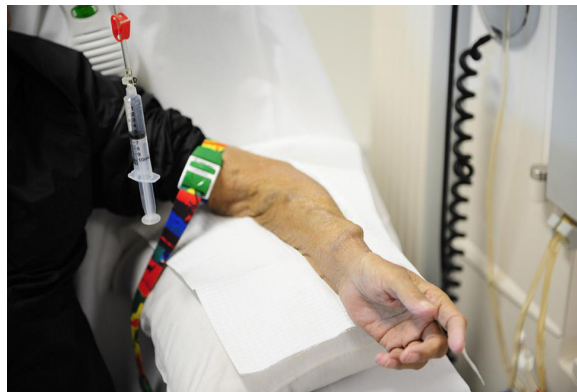
Don't be afraid to ask any questions you have about your operation.

- You will need to sign a consent form
- You will be asked to come to the hospital either the day before, or on the morning of your surgery
- From midnight before your surgery do not eat or drink anything
- Check with your doctor about your regular medications (for any changes needed)
- Your arm will be shaved and the vein marked with a pen.

## Surgery

For you to receive your fistula/graft you will need a minor operation. For the most commonly created fistula, the operation will take one hour and will be performed in an operating theatre at the hospital.

Mostly, the operation is performed under a general anaesthetic or in special cases, some people may have a special type of local anaesthetic called a 'block'.



## Caring for your wound

- Keep the wound dry for the first 48 hours
- You may wash the wound with soap and water and pat dry with a clean towel.

Once the wound has healed, exercise your hand by frequently squeezing a ball to build up your fistula and improve the blood flow. This is really important for the first three months.

## After your surgery

You will be brought back to the Planned Procedure Unit and it is normal to:

- Have a dressing covering your wound
- There may be a small amount of blood ooze on the dressing
- You may have a scar with a number of stitches
- You may experience some pain. Pain relief is available if required (see your nurse)
- Your arm will be elevated on a pillow to reduce swelling for the first few hours
- The nurse will frequently check your fistula with a stethoscope to listen for the blood flow "the bruit" as well as check for bleeding
- Your arm may appear swollen with a small amount of redness over the scar..

There may be some numbness around the wound or near the base of your thumb. You should still have feeling, warmth and movement in your fingers.

If you are concerned, speak to the nurse responsible for your care.

If you have stitches they will be removed 10-14 days after the operation.