

## 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.

## 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



## What is a fistula/ graft?

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



Queensland  
Government

## Why a fistula/graft?

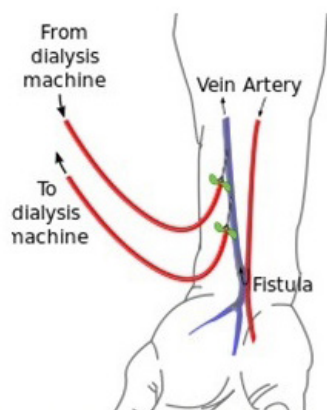
The doctor will have told you that you may need to commence dialysis soon. This is because tests show that your kidneys are failing.

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

## What is a fistula?

An arteriovenous or AV fistula is the surgical joining of an artery and a vein.

The joining of an artery and a vein causes the vein to grow large enough to connect the needles to be placed into your arm to perform haemodialysis.



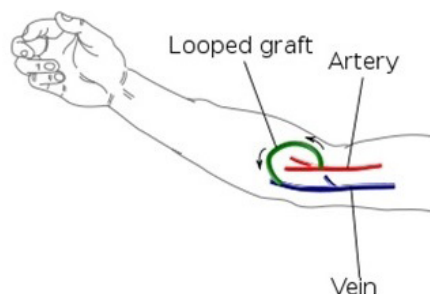
Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Radiocephalic\\_fistula.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Radiocephalic_fistula.svg)

If the veins in your arm are unsuitable, a vein may be taken from your leg and placed in your arm to make the fistula.

## What is a graft?

An arteriovenous or AV graft is where a synthetic material is used to join a vein and an artery. A graft will be used only if your own veins are found to be unsuitable.

The AV graft forms a loop between your vein and artery to allow the needles to be placed for haemodialysis.



Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Arteriovenous\\_graft\\_\(en\).svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Arteriovenous_graft_(en).svg)

## Living with the fistula/graft

After you have had your surgery and once the wound is healed, you can be fully active except for contact sports.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the Renal Unit

## Where will they put the fistula/graft?

This will depend on the size and quality of your blood vessels. The surgeon tries to create the fistula in your non-writing arm, generally near the wrist.

If this is not possible the fistula is created in the next best place, either elsewhere on the arm, or in the other wrist.



Figure 1:  
Graft in the upper arm

Figure 2:  
Fistula in the lower arm

This brochure is one of three that have been developed to help explain this process.

For more information please also read:

- Surgery for a fistula/graft
- Follow up and cannulation

## Other helpful sites include:

Kidney Health Australia - [Kidney.org.au](http://Kidney.org.au)  
Ontario Renal Network - [www.renalnetwork.on.ca](http://www.renalnetwork.on.ca)