AV Fistula or Graft Surgery

Activity
- You may resume normal daily activity as you feel able.
- No strenuous activity or lifting of heavy objects until you are cleared by your surgeon.
- You may drive when you feel well enough, as long as you are no longer taking narcotic pain medication.
- You may shower 72 hours after the procedure. No tub baths or swimming until the incision is completely healed.

Care for Your Incision
- Your incision was closed with dissolvable sutures. The skin is then closed with steri strips, pieces of paper tape. The steri strips should fall off in 7 days. If they do not fall off you may remove them after 7 days.
- Your incision was closed with sutures or staples. These will be removed at a follow up visit.
- It is normal for the incisions to be slightly tender, pink and bruised. If you notice increased swelling, tenderness, warmth, redness or drainage of pus you should notify your surgeon's office.

Pain
- You will be given pain medication
- Pain medication can cause constipation. In addition to increasing the amount of water that you drink, over the counter medication can be used (Colace, Milk of Magnesia, Dulcolax)

Special Instructions
- Do not restrict the blood flow through the fistula/graft. Avoid wearing tight clothing, hanging things over the arm, or carrying heavy objects with the arm that the fistula/graft was placed.
- Check for blood flow through the fistula/graft several times daily by feeling for a vibration or "buzzing" feeling over the fistula/graft (this is called a thrill).
- Exercise the operative arm for 10-15 minutes several times a day. This can be accomplished by squeezing a rubber ball or lifting a 1 pound weight, such as a soup can. This will promote enlargement of the vein.

Using the Fistula / Graft for Dialysis
- It takes a number of weeks for the fistula or graft to heal well enough to be used for dialysis.
- A fistula, is a natural connection between the artery and vein, will take approximately 12 weeks before it is ready to be used.
- A graft, is a synthetic connection between artery and vein, will be ready for use in approximately 2-3 weeks.
• If you have a dialysis catheter in place, you must wait until your fistula/graft is cleared for use by your surgeon. Once it is used for one week without any problems, we can schedule you for removal of your catheter.

**When to Call Your Physician**

- Fevers greater than 101.5 F or chills
- Redness, increased swelling, tenderness or drainage of pus from incision
- Severe or unusual arm pain, numbness, coldness, or weakness
- Absence of the vibration or buzzing feeling in the fistula/graft