HealthPro Surgery
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PATIENT GUIDE

Aga Khan Hospital Mombasa
Doctors' Plaza, First Floor

DIALYSIS ACCESS

Caring for your AV fistula

Your fistula is your lifeline for dialysis. A few simple daily habits help it work well and last for many years, and knowing the warning signs means problems can be treated before the fistula is lost.

Fistula arm: _____ **Date created:** _____

Every day

Feel the thrill

Place your fingers lightly over the fistula each morning and evening. You should feel a continuous buzz.

Keep it clean

Wash the arm with soap and water every day and before every dialysis session.

Protect the arm

No blood pressure, blood tests, injections or drips in the fistula arm. Tell every health worker which arm it is.

Nothing tight

No watches, bracelets, tight sleeves or bags pressing on the fistula. Do not sleep on that arm.

Avoid injury

Protect the arm from knocks and cuts, and avoid carrying heavy loads with it.

After dialysis

Press firmly but gently on the needle sites until bleeding stops, without blocking the flow.

After the operation

- Keep the arm raised on a pillow for the first few days. Gentle finger and wrist movement is encouraged.
- Keep the dressing clean and dry until it is reviewed.
- When advised, squeeze a soft ball several times a day to help the vein enlarge.
- A fistula usually needs about 6 weeks or longer to mature before it is used for dialysis.

Seek help the same day if

- You can no longer feel the buzz (thrill) or hear the whoosh
- Redness, heat, swelling, pus or fever around the fistula
- Your hand becomes cold, pale, numb or painful
- The whole arm, hand or face becomes swollen
- The skin over the fistula becomes thin, shiny, scabbed or ulcerated

Bleeding that does not stop after 10–15 minutes of firm pressure is an emergency: keep pressing and go to A&E.

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Mon–Fri 9 am–5 pm · Sat 9 am–12 noon

General guidance only. Always follow the specific instructions given to you by our team.
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