

## This brochure will help you to:

- Take care of your fistula or graft
- Recognise warning signs
- Be ready to act when you have a bleed.

### DAILY CHECK:

#### Feel for:

- A thrill or a buzz
- Tenderness
- Heat (hotter than surrounding skin)

#### Look for:

- Changes in skin colour
- Swelling
- Bleeding or weeping
- Any other change in appearance

#### Listen for:

- A bruit or a whooshing sound.



## Contact Details

An initiative of the NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation. This brochure was originally developed by Royal North Shore Hospital Renal Services and provided to the ACI Dialysis Working Group for distribution throughout NSW. (March 2012).

## Bleeding Dialysis Fistula or Graft

### Information for Patients and Carers



### Recognise the Risks

A bleeding dialysis fistula or graft can be fatal. It is rare, but must be recognised.

# Be Aware

It is rare for a fistula/graft to bleed excessively after dialysis, but it does happen and can lead to rupture.

The good news is that there are often warning signs. You need to know them and be ready to respond.

## Warning Signs:

You have a higher risk of excess bleeding if your fistula or graft:

- Is not healing
- Is infected
- Is bulging and noticeably increasing in size
- Feels firmer than usual
- Has very thin or shiny skin

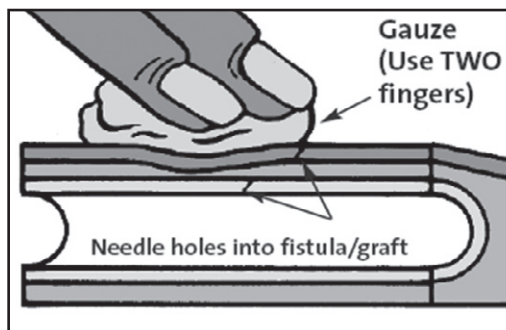
or if you have:

- High venous pressures on dialysis
- Longer clotting time (increased INR).

**As soon as you notice any of these warning signs, you need to notify your dialysis unit staff.**

Contact details are on the back of this brochure. On weekends, contact the renal registrar through the hospital switchboard.

# Holding Off



- Use at **least** 2 fingers to hold the gauze
- Apply **firm, continuous** pressure
- Wait **at least 10 minutes** before checking to see if bleeding has stopped
- When bleeding stops apply fresh gauze and tape or a clean pressure pad
- If bleeding restarts commence holding off again and **GET HELP**.

**Inform the dialysis unit staff of all instances of bleeding at home from your fistula or graft.**

## REMEMBER:

**If in doubt, ring 000 and get help immediately**

# Be Prepared!

You should have an emergency kit available, containing:

- 4 packets gauze swabs
- 1 roll adhesive tape (micropore)
- 4 pressure pads similar to those applied after dialysis.

## Action Plan:

**You need to be ready in the event that your fistula or graft starts to bleed after you have left dialysis.**

There are some simple things you can do:

- **Stay calm**
- Ask for help from anyone nearby.
- You should be able to control the bleeding by putting pressure on the spot. Apply firm pressure to the area, using gauze from your emergency kit if you have it with you.
- Hold the spot for at least 10 minutes. If the bleeding stops, apply fresh gauze and tape or a clean pressure pad.
- If it is still bleeding, use your fingers to again apply pressure to the bleeding spot, and ring **000** for an ambulance.