

## Are You Using a Catheter for Hemodialysis?



- If so, do you have a plan for a permanent access?
- Have you been using the catheter for 90 days or longer?
- Have you been told fistulas are better and safer accesses than catheters?
- Have you chosen not to get a fistula or another permanent access?

If you use a catheter for hemodialysis and your dialysis staff or kidney doctor have been encouraging you to change from a catheter to a fistula, you have probably received advice like this, ***“You need to get a permanent access because catheters are dangerous; catheter complications can cause serious infections in the bloodstream and the heart.”***

Why do people with catheters want to keep using their catheters, even when they know there is a high risk of catheter related illness or infection. Often it is because their fear and anxiety about surgery, needles or changes in appearance get in the way of good decision-making. It’s not unusual to hear someone with a catheter say - *“I’m nervous about having surgery”*, *“What will my arm look like with a fistula?”* or *“I don’t want a fistula because I’m afraid of having needles put in my arm for dialysis.”*

If you have fears and concerns about getting a fistula or other permanent access placed, there are things YOU can do to help decrease or overcome the fear and anxiety:

- ➔ Find out as much as you can about fistulas. Read stories written by people who have had fistulas for many years. A fun and interesting place to learn about vascular access is the Kidney School website at [www.kidneyschool.org](http://www.kidneyschool.org).
- ➔ Talk to people in your facility who use a fistula for dialysis. Ask them, ***“What was the worst part of the experience? What are the benefits of having a fistula? Were you afraid of the needles – if so, how did you handle that? What do you tell people who ask about your fistula?”***
- ➔ If you are afraid of needles, ask your kidney doctor and dialysis staff for suggestions. Some people use anti-anxiety medicine or hypnosis. Others do self-cannulation (inserting their own needles) so they have control over how slow or fast the needles are inserted in the fistula.
- ➔ If you have had vascular access problems in the past and are afraid to “use up” another access site, ask your kidney doctor to refer you to a vascular access surgeon who ***specializes*** in people with complicated access placements.
- ➔ If you are worried about the surgery, ask your kidney doctor, surgeon or nurse to explain what will happen during the surgery. Will they put you to sleep? How long will the surgery take? How does the surgeon create the vascular access?

### ***Did You Know?***

- *Experts say people getting a permanent access should be evaluated for a fistula first.*
- *If for any reason, a fistula is not possible, the experts say a graft is a safer access than a catheter for most people.*
- *Only about 10% of people on dialysis **have** to use a catheter for dialysis because there is no place to put a fistula or graft.*