

Vascular Access for Hemodialysis

Exercises for your Fistula: Before and After Surgery

Exercising your fistula arm **before** your fistula is created may help make the vein bigger and improve your chances of having a working fistula. As soon as you know you will need a fistula, start doing the exercises.

Exercising your fistula arm **after** your fistula is created may help improve muscle tone and make your vein more stable and easier to needle. Your doctor or nurse will tell you when to start the exercises. In most cases, it is about 2 weeks after surgery.

Please ask your nurse to demonstrate these exercises before you try them.

Exercise 1

- Hold a soft ball or rolled wash cloth in your fistula hand.
- Allow your arm to hang down beside your body.
- Squeeze the ball or rolled washcloth. Hold for a count of 5, then relax. Do this 10 times.
- Repeat this exercise 3 - 4 times a day.



Exercise 2

- Hold a soft ball or rolled wash cloth in your fistula hand.
- Place your arm lengthwise on a table.
- Using your non-fistula hand, apply pressure to your fistula arm below your elbow crease (lower arm fistula) or below your shoulder (upper arm fistula).
- Squeeze the ball or rolled washcloth. Hold for a count of 5, then relax. Do this 10 times.
- Repeat this exercise 3 - 4 times a day.
- If you are doing this exercise after your fistula has been created, check for the thrill before and after the exercise.



Exercise 3 (Bicep Curl)

- Rest your elbow on a table.
- Hold a two - five pound weight in your hand.
- Raise your hand and bend your elbow. Lower your hand down to the table. Do this 10 times.
- Repeat this exercise 3 - 4 times a day.

