

Removing your temporary haemodialysis catheter (vascath)



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If you are receiving haemodialysis for chronic kidney disease (CKD), you may have had a catheter or line put into the large veins in your groin or neck. This will have helped your healthcare team access your veins for dialysis. The catheter is intended for short-term use – usually 1-4 weeks. It is also known as a vascath, in comparison with long-term tunnelled catheters or permacaths which can stay in place for up to a year.

This leaflet describes what happens when your temporary haemodialysis catheter is removed. Your healthcare team will be happy to answer any further questions you have before your haemodialysis catheter is removed.



Do I have to have the haemodialysis catheter removed?

Your haemodialysis catheter is only intended for short-term use and may cause problems if it is left in for too long. It is important to understand why your haemodialysis catheter is being removed and your healthcare team can explain this to you.

Your haemodialysis catheter may need to be removed because it is:

- Damaged
- No longer needed
- Not working well
- Carrying an infection that can't be cleared by antibiotics

What will happen before my haemodialysis catheter is removed?

Your healthcare team will check your recent blood test results to make sure that your blood clots normally. If possible, your haemodialysis catheter should not be removed if you have recently had any blood thinning injections or medicines.

Do not stop any medications unless asked to by your healthcare team.



How will my haemodialysis catheter be removed?

You be asked to lie on your back, on a hospital bed. If your haemodialysis catheter is in your neck, you may be asked to lie flat or with your head slightly below the level of your feet. You should make sure that you are lying comfortably before your haemodialysis catheter is removed. You will not need any anaesthetic and you will be awake during the procedure.

The nurse or doctor will clean their hands and clean the area around where your haemodialysis catheter is. Any stitches that are holding your haemodialysis catheter in place will be taken out. The nurse or doctor will then pull out the catheter and press firmly on the area where the haemodialysis catheter was for a period of time. They will keep pressing until they are happy that that hole made by the haemodialysis catheter is now closed and until any bleeding has stopped. They will then place a dressing over the area to keep it clean.

You should keep this dressing on for 48 hours and the area should be kept clean and dry. Your healthcare team can give you some clean dressings in case the first one comes loose or gets wet, so that you can replace it until the 48 hours is over.



Will removing the haemodialysis catheter hurt?

Removing a haemodialysis catheter does not usually hurt. However it may be a bit uncomfortable, particularly when the nurse or doctor is pressing on the area where your haemodialysis catheter was removed from.

What will happen after the haemodialysis catheter is removed?

Once the haemodialysis catheter is out, you will be asked to stay lying flat on the bed for at least two hours, to reduce the risk of any bleeding starting again.

During this time your healthcare team will keep checking on you and examine the dressing to make sure there is no ongoing bleeding. They will also check your blood pressure and pulse regularly. If you notice any bleeding or your breathing becomes more difficult, it is important that you tell the nurse or doctor immediately.

If your healthcare team are happy that everything is okay after around two hours, you will be allowed to get up and move about.

Your healthcare team will tell you when you are able to restart medications that may make you more prone to bleeding. This will normally be either the same day or the following day.

You should avoid heavy lifting, strenuous exercise or contact sports for a few days after your haemodialysis catheter has been removed. This is to prevent any bleeding from the area where your haemodialysis catheter has come out from. Gentle walking is fine but you should not overexert yourself.



Are there any risks associated with removing a temporary haemodialysis catheter?

Although removing a temporary haemodialysis catheter is usually safe, there are some risks associated with it. Your healthcare team will watch you closely for any problems in the hours after your haemodialysis catheter has been removed.

- It is normal to have some **mild discomfort and bruising** in the days after your haemodialysis catheter is removed. Painkillers such as paracetamol are usually enough to help and this should get better quickly.
- Risk of **bleeding**. This may be a small amount of blood which can be seen through the dressing after your haemodialysis catheter comes out. If there is a larger amount of blood it is important to act quickly as this can be very serious and life threatening (see the box below). Sometimes the bleeding is internal and cannot be seen. If you see bruising spreading in your leg or back, or suddenly begin to feel lightheaded when sitting or standing, you should seek urgent medical advice (see box below).



- Risk of **infection** where the haemodialysis catheter was removed. Signs of infection include redness, swelling and pain. You may also see pus and you may feel feverish.

If you notice any of these symptoms it is vital that you seek medical help quickly, either through your healthcare team, GP or the Accident & Emergency department at your local hospital.

It is important to tell them that you have recently had a haemodialysis catheter removed.

- Risk of **air embolism**. This occurs when air accidentally enters the large vein through the hole where the haemodialysis catheter was placed. This air can travel to your heart or lungs and stop blood from getting through. This is rare but is very serious and can be life-threatening. Your medical team will reduce the chances of this happening by making sure that you are lying down flat when your haemodialysis catheter is removed.



If your wound is bleeding:

1. Call for help from a friend, family member or neighbour if possible
2. Put firm pressure on the wound and don't take it off for at least five minutes
3. Seek medical advice (you may need to call 999)

and until the bleeding has stopped. This also reduces the risk of air embolism




Where can I find out more information?

- Kidney Care UK: About Kidney Health - www.kidneycareuk.org/about-kidney-health
- NHS Choices: Dialysis - www.nhs.uk/conditions/dialysis
- Renal Association Patient Information Leaflets: includes leaflets on Haemodialysis and Chronic kidney disease - www.renal.org/information-resources/patient-leaflets
- Patient View: www.patientview.org
 - Online access to your health records. Ask your renal unit for details about how to join



 www.kidneycareuk.org

 01420 541424

 Kidney Care UK,
3 The Windmills,
St Mary's Close, Turk Street,
Alton GU34 1EF


 [kidneycareuk.org](https://www.facebook.com/kidneycareuk)


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 [@kidneycareuk](https://www.instagram.com/kidneycareuk)



 www.renal.org

 0117 4148152

 The Renal Association
C/O UK Renal Registry,
Learning and Research Building,
Southmead Hospital,
Bristol BS10 5NB

 [@RenalAssoc](https://twitter.com/RenalAssoc)