“Ready, Set, Go” The Steps to Catheter Freedom
Week 4: Fistula Maturity Check

- Perform fistula maturity check at each treatment or when patient reports a change.
- Reinforce to patient the importance of daily fistula checks.
- Listen to the patient.

**Look**

**Listen**

**Feel**

**Arm Elevation test (AVF Only)**

**Augmentation Test**

Were there any abnormal findings during the fistula maturity check?

- **No**
  - Document that there were no abnormal findings.

- **Yes**
  - Document findings and refer to expert clinician.

Continued...
**Dialysis Professional**

**“Ready, Set, Go” The Steps to Catheter Freedom**

**Week 4: Fistula Maturity Check**

**Look**

- The hand looks the same as it did before surgery.
- The surgery site is clean and dry. The skin over the fistula is all one color and looks like the skin around it.
- The arm is bruised and/or the hand is not the normal color.
- There is redness, swelling, or drainage.

**Listen**

- **Bruit:** Listen with a stethoscope over the anastomosis. This is where the artery is joined to the vein.
  - The bruit is audible. You hear the bruit along the cannulation segment.
  - The bruit sounds like a “whoosh” or, for some, like the beat of a drum.
  - There is no sound, or the bruit is not as loud as the last time it was checked.
  - Sound is different from what a normal bruit should sound like.

**Feel**

- You can feel the fistula and identify the cannulation segment.
  - The cannulation segment is long enough to use two needles placed two inches apart.
  - You cannot feel the fistula.
  - You cannot feel the cannulation segment.
  - The thrill becomes stronger as the fistula matures.
- **Thrill:** A vibration or buzz that can be felt most prominently over the anastomosis; it will diminish along the length of the fistula.
- **Pulsatile:** A Pulsatile beat is one that is stronger than a normal pulse. Fingers placed lightly on the fistula rise and fall with each beat.
  - Thrill: You cannot feel the thrill, or it is weaker than the last time it was checked.

*Continued...*
Arm Elevation

**Lower Arm Fistula**
The fistula outflow vein **collapses** when the arm is raised above the level of the heart.

**Upper Arm Fistula**
The fistula outflow vein **partially collapses** when the arm is raised above the level of the heart. It may feel “flabby” when palpated.

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**Augmentation Test**

**Occlude Access**
Place your fingers on the out-going vein, feel the pulse, and press down until no blood is flowing through the access.

**Palpate Pulse**
Keep your finger on the vein and feel for the pulse near the arterial connection of the fistula.

Pulse is **“strong and bounding”** and may cause your finger to **rise and fall** with each beat.

Pulse **does not** become more forceful or “strong and bounding.”