

# Dialysis Professional

## “Ready, Set, Go” The Steps to Catheter Freedom Week 3: 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)



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...

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### 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**.

The **bruit** sounds like a “whoosh” or for some, like a drumbeat.

There is **no sound**, or the bruit is **not as loud as the last time it was checked**.

**Sound is different** from that of a normal bruit.

### Feel

You can **feel the fistula**.

The cannulation segment is long enough to use two needles placed two inches apart.



You **cannot feel the fistula**, and/or the affected hand is **cold to the touch**.

**Thrill:** A vibration or buzz that can be felt most prominently over the anastomosis; it will diminish along the length of the fistula.

The thrill **becomes stronger** as the fistula matures.

**Pulse:** A slight beating that feels like a heartbeat. When you place your fingers lightly on the fistula, they move slightly.

**Thrill:** You **cannot feel** the thrill, or it is **weaker** than the last time it was checked.

**Pulsatile:** The beat is **stronger than a normal pulse**. Fingers placed lightly on the fistula **rise and fall with each beat**.

**Continued...**

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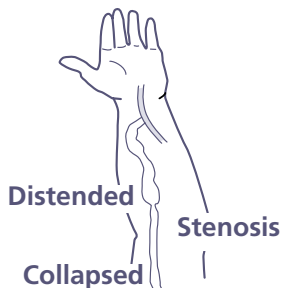
### Arm Elevation

#### 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.



#### Lower Arm Fistula

The fistula outflow vein **does not collapse** after the arm is raised above the level of the heart. This may mean there is a problem allowing the blood to flow from the fistula.

#### Upper Arm Fistula

The fistula outflow vein **does not partially collapse** or become “flabby” after being raised above the level of the heart. This may mean there is a problem allowing the blood to flow from the fistula.



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