"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...
# Dialysis Professional

“Ready, Set, Go” The Steps to Catheter Freedom  
Week 3: Fistula Maturity Check

## GO

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.

## STOP

The arm is bruised and/or the hand is not the normal color.

There is redness, swelling or drainage.

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## Look

- 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 thrill, and/or the affected hand is cold to the touch.
- The thrill becomes stronger as the fistula matures.
- The 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.

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*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.

**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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