**Dialysis Professional**

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

**Weeks 7-10: 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.

**Expert Clinician:**

Assess each access monthly or more often if problems are reported.

**Continued...**
**Look**

- The hand looks the same as it did before surgery.
- The skin over the fistula is uniform in appearance 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 a drum beat.
  - 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**

- **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.
  - 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.
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 collapse partially** 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.