

Dialysis Professional

“Ready, Set, Go” The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 5-6: 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 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**, and can be heard 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

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**.

Continued...

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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.

Pulse: A slight beating that feels like a heartbeat. Fingers placed lightly on the fistula move slightly.

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 will **rise and fall with each beat**.

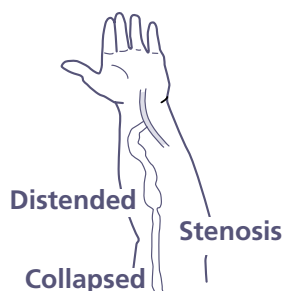
Arm Elevation

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 will **collapse partially** 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.



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