



# Northwest Renal Network

*Helping Navigate Kidney Disease*

January 2012 Patient Bulletin



**Our mission is to promote optimal dialysis and transplant care for kidney patients in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington**

## We Can Help With:

Care concerns

Patient rights

Transplant

Treatment options

Travel and dialysis

Questions about employment

Access to our library of resources

## Protect Your Access – It's Your Lifeline!

**Check your access for a thrill every day.** The thrill is the sensation you feel when you touch your access – it could feel like a cat purring, a vibration or a very strong pulse. It should be checked over the scar line where the surgeon made the incision. If you do not feel one of these sensations, it could mean your access is clotted.

### **Keep your vascular access clean. You should:**

1) Wash your access with soap & water before going to your dialysis seat. **Your nurse or technician should:** 1) Wash their hands. 2) Put on gloves. 3) Clean each area of your access for needle insertion.

### **What to look for when staff cannulates your access.**

- **Grafts and fistulas:** Make sure your needles are placed at least 1 inch apart and the needles are rotated (put in a different hole each treatment).
- **Fistulas using buttonhole:** Make sure the needles are inserted into the same holes at the same angle and depth each treatment. You can learn to do this procedure – it's quick and painless!
- **Catheters:** You and the staff should always wear a mask before opening your catheter to prevent infection. At home, keep your dressing clean and dry, and do not pull on the catheter.

### **Learn how to take care of your access.**

- Avoid clothes with tight-fitting sleeves or elastic.
- Avoid wearing a watch or other jewelry on your access arm.
- Do not carry a pocketbook or groceries with your access arm.
- Do not sleep on your access arm – it could clot at night.
- Be careful not to injure or cut your access arm.
- No blood pressures, IVs, or blood draws from your access arm.

*Materials adapted from Southern California Renal Disease Council, Inc. (Network 18)*

Request our free News Bulletins by email at  
[nwrnbulletins@nw16.esrd.net](mailto:nwrnbulletins@nw16.esrd.net)

Patient Toll-Free Number for Northwest Renal Network: **1.800.262.1514**  
[www.nwrenalnetwork.org](http://www.nwrenalnetwork.org)

