

# Dialysis Professional

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 1-2: 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



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 Weeks 1-2: Fistula Maturity Check



### Look

The dressing is clean and dry.

The skin around the dressing looks like it did before surgery. The hand looks the same as it did before surgery.

When the dressing is no longer needed, the surgery site is clean and dry.

Once it has healed, the skin over the fistula is all one color and looks like the skin around it.



The dressing is wet or soiled.  
There is drainage on the dressing.

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

There is redness, swelling, or drainage.

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.

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

### Feel

You can feel the fistula.



You cannot feel the fistula.  
The hand of the affected arm is cold to the touch.

Continued..

# Dialysis Professional

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 1-2: Fistula Maturity Check



### 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.**

**Pulse** is a slight beating that feels like a heartbeat. Fingers placed lightly on the fistula should **move slightly.**

**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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# 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..

# Dialysis Professional

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Week 3: Fistula Maturity Check



### 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..**

# Dialysis Professional

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Week 3: Fistula Maturity Check



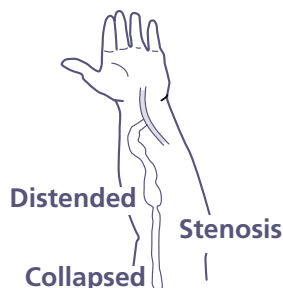
### Arm Elevation

#### 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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# Dialysis Professional

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Week 4: 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



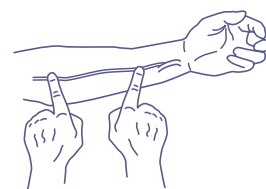
Feel



Arm Elevation test  
(AVF Only)



Augmentation  
Test



Perform once.  
If normal, no need to  
repeat.

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 4: Fistula Maturity Check



### 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**.  
You hear the bruit along the cannulation segment.

The bruit sounds like a "whoosh" or, for some, like the beat of a drum.

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.

**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.

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

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

**Continued..**



# Dialysis Professional

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Week 4: Fistula Maturity Check



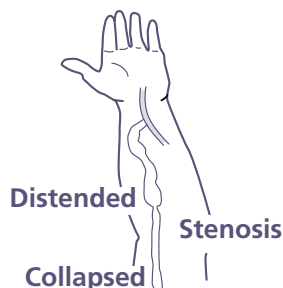
### Arm Elevation

#### 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.



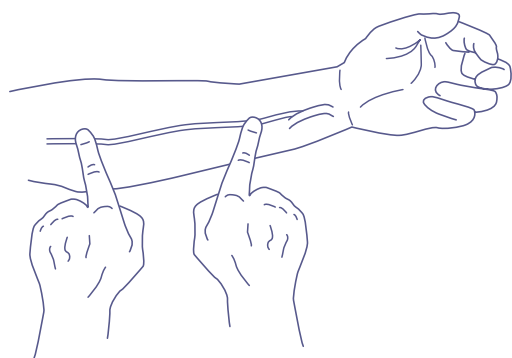
#### Lower Arm Fistula

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.

### Augmentation Test



#### Occlude Access

Place your fingers on the out-going vein, feel the pulse, and press down until no blood is flowing through the access.

#### Palpate Pulse

Keep your finger on the vein and feel for the pulse near the arterial connection of the fistula.

Pulse is **"strong and bounding"** and may cause your finger to **rise and fall** with each beat.

Pulse **does not** become more forceful or **"strong and bounding."**



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# 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..**

# Dialysis Professional

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 5-6: Fistula Maturity Check



### 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..**

# Dialysis Professional

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 5-6: Fistula Maturity Check



### 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**.

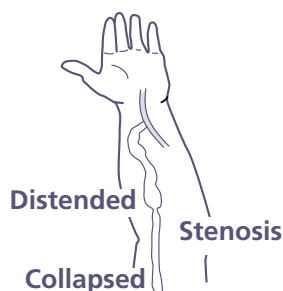
### Arm Elevation

#### 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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# 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..**

# Dialysis Professional

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 7-10: Fistula Maturity Check



### 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.

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

**Continued..**

# Dialysis Professional

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 7-10: Fistula Maturity Check



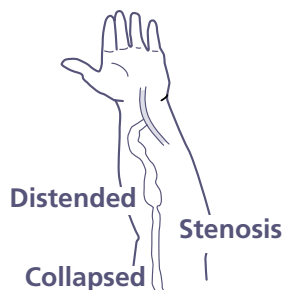
### Arm Elevation

#### 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.



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# Patient

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 1-2: New Fistula Daily Check

Access  
Placed



Weeks 1-2



Week 3



Weeks 4-5



Week 6

Catheter  
Freedom

Week 10

### Check your fistula every day.

If you do not know how, ask your Dialysis Care Team to teach you how to monitor your fistula.

**Look**



**Feel**



**Did you notice anything different  
when you checked your fistula today?**

**No change.**



**Yes, a change.**



**Continued..**



# Patient

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 1-2: New Fistula Daily Check



### Look



The dressing is **clean and dry**.

The skin around the dressing looks **like it did** before you had surgery. The hand **looks the same** as it did before surgery.

When the dressing is no longer needed, the surgery site is **clean and dry**.

Once it has healed, the **skin over the fistula** is **all one color** and looks like the skin around it.

The dressing is **wet or soiled**.  
There is **drainage** on the dressing.

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

There is **redness, swelling, or drainage**.

There is **redness, swelling, or drainage**.

### Feel



When a dressing is no longer needed, place your hand over the fistula. **You can feel the fistula under the skin**.

**You cannot feel the fistula. The hand of the affected arm feels numb and/or cold to the touch.**

**Ask a member of your Dialysis Care Team to complete the form below.**  
**Did any of the results of your daily fistula check fall under the "STOP" column?**  
**If so, call the contact listed below and share your results to find out what to do next.**

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
During regular facility hours: \_\_\_\_\_  
After hours: \_\_\_\_\_



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# Patient

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Week 3: New Fistula Daily Check

Access  
Placed



Weeks 1-2



Week 3



Weeks 4-5



Week 6

Catheter  
Freedom

Week 10

# Check your fistula every day.

If you do not know how, ask your Dialysis Care Team to teach you how to monitor your fistula.

**Look**



**Listen**



**Feel**



**Did you notice anything different  
when you checked your fistula today?**

**No change.**



**Yes, a change.**



**Continued..**

# Patient

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Week 3: New Fistula Daily Check



### Look

The surgery site is **clean and dry**.  
The skin over the fistula is **all one color** and **looks like the skin around it**.

The hand **looks the same** as it did before surgery.



There is **redness, swelling** or **drainage**.

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

### Listen

When you place your fistula next to your ear, **you hear the sound of the blood going through it**.

As the fistula grows larger, the sound becomes louder.



**You hear no sound or decreased sound.**

### Feel

You **feel the fistula** under the skin. At first, the fistula seems small, but it should grow over time.



You cannot feel the fistula. The hand of the affected arm feels **numb** or **cold to the touch**.

**Continued..**

# Patient

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Week 3: New Fistula Daily Check



### Feel



Thrill: A vibration or buzz that can be felt best over the scar. This is where the artery and vein are joined together. The thrill becomes stronger over time as the fistula grows.

You feel the thrill along the rest of the fistula, but it doesn't feel as strong as it does over the scar.

You cannot feel the thrill or it is weaker over the scar than it was the last time you checked it.

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

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

**Ask a member of your Dialysis Care Team to complete the form below.**  
**Did any of the results of your daily fistula check fall under the "STOP" column?**  
**If so, call the contact listed below and share your results to find out what to do next.**

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
During regular facility hours: \_\_\_\_\_  
After hours: \_\_\_\_\_



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# Patient

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 4-5: New Fistula Daily Check

Access  
Placed



Weeks 1-2



Week 3



Weeks 4-5



Week 6

Catheter  
Freedom

Week 10

## Check your fistula every day.

If you do not know how, ask your Dialysis Care Team to teach you how to monitor your fistula.

**Look**



**Listen**



**Feel**



**Did you notice anything different  
when you checked your fistula today?**

**No change.**



**Yes, a change.**



**Continued..**

# Patient

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 4-5: New Fistula Daily Check



### Look

The hand **looks the same** as it did before surgery.

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

When you place your fistula next to your ear, **you hear the sound of the blood going through it**.

As the fistula grows larger, the sound becomes louder.



**You hear no sound or decreased sound.**

### Feel

You **feel the fistula under the skin**. At first, the fistula seems small but it should grow over time.



**You cannot feel the fistula. The hand of the affected arm feels numb or cold to the touch.**

**Continued..**

# Patient

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 4-5: New Fistula Daily Check



### Feel



Thrill: A vibration or buzz that can be felt best over the scar. This is where the artery and vein are joined together.

The thrill **becomes stronger** over time, as the fistula grows.

You feel the thrill along the rest of the fistula, but it doesn't feel as strong as it does over the scar.

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

You cannot feel the thrill or it is weaker over the scar than it was the last time you checked it.

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

**Ask a member of your Dialysis Care Team to complete the form below.**  
**Did any of the results of your daily fistula check fall under the "STOP" column?**  
**If so, call the contact listed below and share your results to find out what to do next.**

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
During regular facility hours: \_\_\_\_\_  
After hours: \_\_\_\_\_



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# Patient

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 6-10: New Fistula Daily Check

Access  
Placed



Weeks 1-2



Week 3



Weeks 4-5



Week 6

Catheter  
Freedom

Week 10

## Check your fistula every day.

If you do not know how, ask your Dialysis Care Team to teach you how to monitor your fistula.

**Look**



**Listen**



**Feel**



**Did you notice anything different  
when you checked your fistula today?**

**No change.**



Great! Keep checking each day. At your next treatment, tell your Dialysis Care Team that there was no change.

**Yes, a change.**



Call the contact given to you by your Dialysis Care Team. Share what you found. They will tell you what to do next.

**Continued..**



# Patient

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 6-10: New Fistula Daily Check



### Look

The skin over your fistula is **all one color** and **looks like the skin** around it.



There is **redness, swelling** or **drainage**.

### Listen

When you place your fistula next to your ear, you hear a **sound**. **The sounds is the same as the last time** you checked it.



You hear **no sound**, or the sound you hear is **different** than the last time you checked it.

### Feel



**Thrill:** A vibration or buzz that can be felt best over the scar. This is where the artery and vein are joined together.

You can **feel the thrill best over the scar**. You feel it along the rest of the fistula, but it won't feel as strong.

You **cannot feel the thrill** or it is **weaker** over the area where the artery is joined to the vein. It is **not as strong as it was the last time you checked it**.

**Continued..**

# Patient

## "Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom Weeks 6-10: New Fistula Daily Check



### Feel

Pulse is a slight beating like a heartbeat.  
When you place your fingers lightly on the  
fistula, they move slightly.



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

*Ask a member of your Dialysis Care Team to complete the form below.  
Did any of the results of your daily fistula check fall under the "STOP" column?  
If so, call the contact listed below and share your  
results to find out what to do next.*

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
During regular facility hours: \_\_\_\_\_  
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