

Department of Renal Medicine.

Patient information – Permcaths

What is a Permcath?

A Permcath is a flexible plastic tube that can be put into a vein just below the neck. The tube can then be used for haemodialysis. It is divided into two so that blood can flow in and out at the same time during the haemodialysis treatment.

How is the Permcath put in?

The Doctor will inject some local anaesthetic under the skin close to your collar bone. He/she will then make a small incision and pass the Permcath under the skin and into one of the large veins. The Permcath will be held in place with two or three stitches which will be removed by the nurse after seven to ten days. By this time the skin will have grown around the Permcath and this will hold it in place. The Permcath will stay in when you go home.

How does the Permcath work?

When you arrive at the hospital for your dialysis, the nurse will remove the caps and clean the ends of the Permcath. He/she will take a small amount of blood out of each side of the Permcath and discard it to make sure that no blood clots are present.

The nurse will flush each side of the Permcath with saline. The Permcath can then be connected to the dialysis lines. Blood will come out of one side of the Permcath, it will pass through the dialyser, (artificial kidney), to be cleaned and will return to you through the other side of the Permcath. The blood is flowing continuously around a circuit: there is only a small amount of your blood outside your body at any one time.

At the end of dialysis, all your blood will go back to you. The nurse will put some saline and heparin into both sides of the Permcath so that no blood clots form and put clean caps on.

How you can help to care for your Permcath.

Taking care of your Permcath may help it to last longer and can help prevent problems such as clotting and infection.

1. Keep the dressing clean and dry. The dressing should be changed each dialysis by the nurse and an anti-bacterial ointment applied. Should your dressing become wet or soiled at home, wash your hands and put on a clean dressing. You can ask your nurse for some dressings to take home.
2. You may shower once the skin has healed around the Permcath and the stitches have been removed. This is usually after 14 days, please check with your nurse. It is advisable that you leave the dressing on whilst showering and remove it afterwards. The area around the catheter should be gently patted dry with a clean towel. A clean dressing should then be applied. Soaking the line by bathing and swimming should be avoided.
3. Please avoid using talcum powder and creams around the Permcath exit site.
4. Try to avoid pulling or kinking the Permcath. On dialysis days, please try to wear loose clothing such as a button through top that will allow easy access to your line.

5. Ensure that the clamps and caps remain closed at all times when the Permcath is not being used for dialysis. **Never open your catheter to the air.**
6. Please make sure that only your dialysis care team use your Permcath: it is not to be used for any purpose other than haemodialysis.
7. Tell your dialysis team if the area around your Permcath feels sore, looks red or has any drainage of fluid or pus.

Should you have any concerns about your Permcath?

Clots: it is possible for a small blood clot to form in the tube. This should not be harmful to you: it will remain in the tube until the nurse removes it with a syringe. Sometimes it may need to be dissolved by putting a “clot-busting” injection into the tube. If the whole tube becomes blocked it is sometimes necessary to remove the Permcath and put in a new one.

Infection can occur even if we all try very hard to be clean. Symptoms of infection that you may experience are:

1. Sore, red area around the Permcath.
2. Oozing from the area around the Permcath.
3. Fever or chills.
4. Feeling generally unwell.

You should tell your dialysis team at once if you have any of these symptoms.

An infection can usually be treated with antibiotics - these might be: cream around the Permcath, tablets, or injected into your blood while you are having dialysis.

You should contact the Renal Department immediately if:

1. You have any symptoms of infection, (see above).
2. You have any pain, discomfort or swelling around the Permcath or in your arm on the side of the Permcath.
3. The caps or clamps break/fall off.
4. You notice a tear or hole in the Permcath.
5. You notice any bleeding either from or around the tube.

Contacts:

Jack Pryor Dialysis Unit: 01603 288240

Cromer Dialysis Unit: 01603 646155

Langley Ward: 01603 286069

Sources:

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