

## How is my AV Fistula paid for?

Most insurance plans will pay for your access. If you do not have coverage there are other options, talk to a social worker or someone in your doctor's billing office.

## What is AV Fistula First?

**AV Fistula First is a Medicare/Medicaid supported group of kidney professionals and patient groups. We are working together to increase the use of AV fistulas among people who need hemodialysis by:**

- **Educating and training healthcare professionals**
- **Reaching out to people with kidney disease – we have information and resources on our website to help you along the road toward living a good life with kidney failure**

## Where can I get more information about vascular access and AV fistulas?

The AV Fistula First website has information to help you learn more about treatment options. The website can also help you and your care team decide if an AV fistula is the right choice for you.

Learn about AV fistulas and what type of access may be right for you. Visit the website, then talk to your kidney doctor.

[www.fistulafirst.org](http://www.fistulafirst.org)



"I have had CKD/ESRD since 1982. I have been on hemodialysis, had a transplant, then went back to peritoneal dialysis. I'm currently on hemodialysis. It was not until I ran out of options that I took a chance on an AV fistula. I wish I had done it sooner. It has worked well for me and is much better than having to worry about a catheter."

- Celeste L., AV Fistula Patient



arteriovenous  
**FISTULA FIRST**  
AVF – The first choice for hemodialysis

Frequently  
Asked  
Questions

For  
Patients and Families

## What is hemodialysis?

When you have kidney failure your body cannot get rid of waste products and excess fluid. Instead, these build up in the blood. Hemodialysis is one way to clean and filter the blood. It uses an artificial kidney, called a dialyzer. During treatment, the dialyzer filters the blood and then cleaned blood is returned to your body.



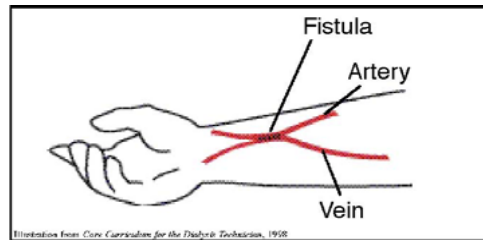
## What is a vascular access?

If you choose hemodialysis, you will need a vascular access. This is the point from which your blood will go from your body to the dialyzer and back.

## 3 kinds of vascular access:

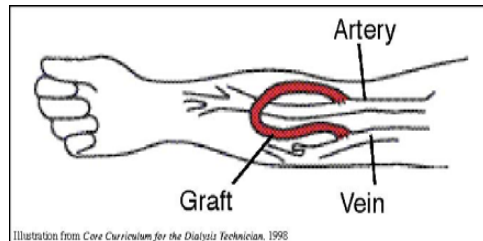
### ■ Arteriovenous (AV) fistula

An artery and a vein are connected to each other. A fistula is usually placed in an arm.



### ■ Arteriovenous graft

An artificial vein is used to connect an artery to a vein. Grafts can be placed in an arm or leg.



### ■ Venous catheter

A "Y" shaped plastic tube is put into a large vein in the chest, neck, or groin. Because there is a high risk of infection, catheters are usually only for temporary access (not pictured).

## What is an AV fistula?

Joining an artery to a vein makes an AV fistula. A surgeon most often does this in the lower arm. The connection allows more blood flow into the vein, which allows the vein to be used for vascular access.

## Why is an AV fistula better than the other access types?

AV fistulas last longer and need fewer repairs because a person's own vein is used. They also have lower rates of infection and hospital stays.

Talk to your kidney doctor about an AV fistula. Ask for it as your first choice of vascular access for hemodialysis.

