What will I experience following my surgery? cont’d

General Information:
- Avoid putting any pressure on your fistula arm, don’t lean on hand, or lean on bent elbow.
- Never wear tight sleeves, watches, bracelets over your graft or fistula.
- Never carry heavy loads across or on the graft or fistula (i.e. purse, shopping bags) or sleep on it.
- **DO NOT** bend at the elbow if the incision is in the elbow area (i.e. at immediately above or below) to prevent its compression of the shunt.
- **DO NOT** allow anyone to monitor your blood pressure, take blood or insert I.V.’s on your fistula arm.
- Exercise your fistula arm by squeezing a tennis ball a few times every hour in order to promote circulation and enlargement of the vein.
- You may experience some bruising, swelling and discomfort in your fistula arm. This is normal and pain medication may be prescribed.
- If you have had an internal graft created, you may experience some swelling around the area for approximately 2 weeks.
- Do not remove the waterproof dressing the surgeon applied over access site until indicated.

When should I call the doctor?
- If there is increased pain, swelling, redness over site, purulent drainage, fever.
- If there is excessive coolness, pain or numbness in hand.
- If there is absence of audible bruit or thrill over graft or fistula (you will be taught by Dialysis nurse).

Additional Instructions:
- Any problems or concerns, contact your physician.
- Refer to Discharge Sheet.

References:
2. Orillia Soldiers Memorial Hospital – Creation of an Arterio-Venous Fistula or Graft.
3. Dr. S. McDonald – Department of Surgery – RVH
**What is an arterio-venous fistula or graft?**

An arterio-venous fistula or graft is a surgical procedure which involves the connection of an artery to a vein to cause venous dilation.

If your own veins are not suitable for a natural fistula creation, an artificial graft made of plastic material will be created called an arterio-venous graft. The most common site for arterio-venous fistula and grafts is the forearms and the upper arms.

**How do I prepare for this procedure?**

- Do not eat after midnight the evening before your procedure.
- Bathe or shower the morning of your surgery.
- Take all your routine morning medications at 6:00 a.m. with a sip of water unless otherwise instructed.
- If you are on diabetic or blood thinning medications, check with your doctor about stopping them.
- You must arrange for a responsible adult to accompany you home and stay with you overnight.

**What are the risks of an arterio-venous fistula or graft?**

- Hand ischemia
- Hand swelling
- Arm numbness
- Infection

**What hospital process am I to expect?**

When you arrive for the procedure, you will register with a clerk in Registration. Once you have registered, a volunteer will assist you to the change room where you will put on a hospital gown.

After you have changed, a nurse will review your medical history and will take your blood pressure and pulse. You will then be taken to a waiting room where you will remain until your name is called. Bring reading material with you.

You will be taken to the Operating Room where you will meet the anesthesiologist. The OR staff will explain each step as it happens. The procedure will be done under local or general anesthetic.

Following the procedure you will be taken to the Post Anesthetic Care Unit (PACU) and observed. When your blood pressure, pulse and breathing are stable, you will be taken to Surgery Recovery. The nurse will also listen to your new fistula or graft with a stethoscope to ensure it is functioning properly. Eventually your nurse in Dialysis will instruct you how to determine normal graft functioning in order that you may do this at home. In Surgery Recovery you will be encouraged to drink fluids.

**What will I experience following my surgery?**

**Activity:**

- Activity is not discouraged but if there is a possibility of injuring your fistula you may need special protection.
- Avoid dangling your fistula arm to prevent swelling. DO NOT let it hang or swing it around.
- Keep the arm extended and elevated above the level of your heart, place it on a pillow while lying down and hold it up when sitting (support on pillow).
- Do not bend elbow more than 90°.

**Diet:**

- Resume your usual diet unless there are specific instructions from your physician.

**Personal Care:**

- You may shower or bathe with assistance as needed. Keep the dressing/incision clean and dry. Take precautions to prevent slipping in shower or tub (i.e. mat, handrail).