

# FISTULA INSTRUCTIONS

## Feel/Look at the:

**STEP 1. SKIN** - Look at the skin over your fistula first. There should be no redness, swelling, pain, or drainage. Next, lightly feel your access. It should not feel warm, swollen or painful.

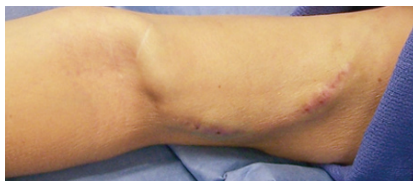
**STEP 2. BULGE** - Look for bulges in your fistula. Bulges are sometimes seen when the dialysis needles are put in the same area every time. Bulges should not have shiny skin, ooze blood, or have skin that “peels” and does not heal. Bulges MAY need surgery - Check with your doctor. .

**STEP 3. PULSE** - Lightly use your fingertips and feel your entire fistula. A faint beating may or may not be felt. A strong beating is the sign of a problem. Pay special attention to the where your vein and artery join - this is the most common place for problems.

**STEP 4. THRILL** - Lightly use your fingers and feel your entire access, paying special attention to areas where the thrill is strong or weak. The thrill should feel like the purring of a cat.

**When you feel the anastomosis of your fistula, (where the scar is) remember, “PULSE IS BAD, THRILL IS GOOD.”** The thrill means blood is flowing; the pulse means there is something trying to pinch off the blood flow (stenosis). Keep your staff informed of changes.

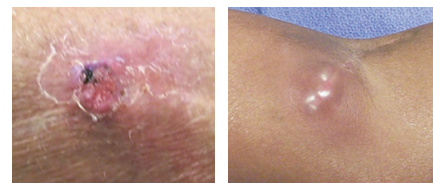
## Normal



**Lightly move up your arm feeling for changes.**



## NOT Normal



The pictures below MAY be normal for your fistula, check with your doctor to be sure. Some fistulas develop bigger than others.



**A strong pounding is a sign of a problem.**



**A change in thrill or no thrill is a sign of a problem.**

