



Fistula Exercises Before and After Surgery

Exercising your fistula arm before your fistula is created may help make the vein bigger and improve your chances of having a working fistula. As soon as you know you will need a fistula, start doing the exercises.

Exercising your fistula arm after your fistula is created may help improve muscle tone and make your vein more stable and easier to needle. Your doctor or nurse will tell you when to start the exercises. In most cases, it is about two weeks after surgery. Note that exercise 3 is often started later than 1 and 2 so the fistula has more time to develop.

Please ask your nurse to demonstrate these exercises before you try them.

Exercise 1:

Use for Upper and Lower Arm Fistula

- Hold a soft ball or rolled wash cloth in your fistula hand.
- Allow your arm to hang down beside your body.
- Squeeze and release the ball in your hand for five minutes.
- Repeat this exercise 3 – 4 times a day.



Exercise 2:

Use for Upper Arm Fistula

- Rest your elbow on a table.
- Hold a 2 – 5 pound weight in your hand.
- Raise your hand and bend your elbow.
- Lower your hand down to the table.
- Repeat this exercise for one minute, 3 – 5 times a day.



**Exercise 3:
Use for Lower Arm Fistula**

- Use a tourniquet and apply it to your upper arm. Ask your nurse about the use of a tourniquet.
- Check that you can feel the thrill in your fistula after the tourniquet is applied.
- Squeeze the ball or rolled washcloth for 1 – 2 minutes, then release the tourniquet.
- Repeat this exercise 2 – 3 times in both the morning and evening.



The information in this pamphlet is provided for educational and information purposes, and to support discussion with your health care team about your medical condition and treatment. It does not constitute medical advice and should not substitute advice given by your physician or other qualified health care professional.

This brochure can be downloaded from the BC Renal Agency website: www.bcrenalagency.ca

