

## How To Care For Your Needle Sites After Dialysis

After your dialysis treatment is finished, it is important to take care of the spots where the needles were. This helps stop the bleeding, prevents bruises, protects your access (fistula or graft), and keeps you safe. If you do not feel well enough to hold the sites yourself, tell your nurse. A family member can also help, or the nurse will do it for you. You do not have to do it yourself until you feel ready.

## What Happens After Dialysis

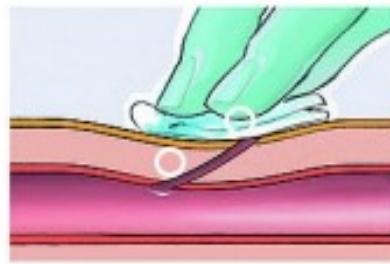
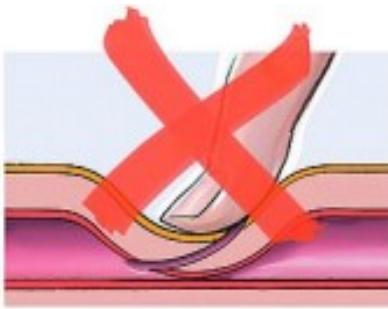
1. At the end of dialysis, your nurse takes out one needle first.
2. When the bleeding has stopped, your nurse covers the spot.
3. Then the nurse takes out the second needle and do the same steps again.

## How To Hold Your Needle Sites

1. Sit or lie in a comfortable position.
2. Clean your hands with sanitizer.
3. Holding your own needle sites with your non-access arm (arm without hemodialysis access site) does NOT require you to wear gloves.
4. If another person is holding your needle sites, they are required to put on gloves to hold your sites.
5. Your nurse takes off the Band-Aid® or tape.
6. The nurse pulls out one needle and immediately apply a sterile gauze pad, pressing on the site with 2 fingers.
7. Your nurse will help you take over holding the site.

## How To Hold the Site

- Use **2 fingers** on top of a sterile gauze for each site:
  - One finger goes on the skin where the needle went in;
  - The other finger goes right above it, over the vein.



Images used with Permission from Fresenius Medical Care 2026

- Press gently but firmly. Hold it for at least 10 minutes without peeking.



- If your access was new, or you take blood thinners like Warfarin, you may need to hold it for 15 minutes or more.
- Slowly press lighter during the last 5 minutes. Stop pressing only when the bleeding has stopped.
- If it starts bleeding again, press gently and firmly, and ask for help.
- You may need to use a new sterile gauze to stop the bleeding.
- You should still feel a light “thrill” (or buzzing) in your access arm. This means blood is flowing.
- When you think the bleeding has stopped, tell your nurse.
- Your nurse will check and put a covering on the spot.
- Repeat these steps for the second needle site, just like the first one.
- Your nurse checks your blood pressure.
- Clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub, or use soap and warm water if they look dirty, before weighing yourself.

### Care At Home

- Always carry Band-Aids®, tape, and clean gauze with you.
- Leave your bandages on for up to 24 hours or until your next dialysis session, as directed by your healthcare provider.
- When you take the bandages off, do NOT scratch or pick the scabs. This helps the area heal.
- If you are a home hemodialysis patient, you can cover your buttonhole sites with gauze and tape for the sites to lightly scab over. The scabs have to be removed to prevent infection before inserting (cannulating with) a blunt needle.

### What To Do If Bleeding Starts at Home

- **Do NOT panic.**
- Press site gently but firmly with your fingers for 10 minutes using a clean towel or gauze. **Do NOT peek.**
- Raise your arm above your heart while pressing.
- After 10 minutes, slowly press lighter for another 5 minutes.
- If the bleeding stops, tape a clean bandage or gauze on the spot.
- Leave it on for 24 hours.
- If bleeding **does NOT** stop:
  - Keep pressing firmly with your fingers.
  - Ask someone at home to help, or **call 911 right away.**
  - Tell the 911 operator you are a dialysis patient and your **fistula is bleeding.**
  - **Do NOT** wrap tape or gauze all the way around your arm. This can stop your blood from flowing.
  - Tell your nurse at your next visit if you had any bleeding at home.
- Inform your nurse of any signs of access infection like redness, pain, warmth and swelling at the site.

Taking care of your needle sites helps your arm heal and keeps your access healthy for future dialysis treatments.

