

## Central Venous Catheter

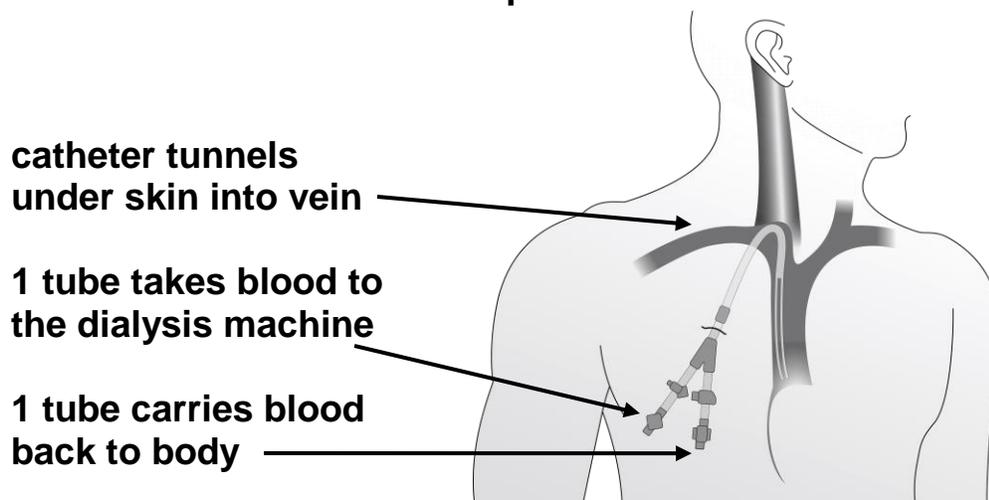
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### What is a central venous catheter?

A central venous catheter is a special tube in a vein used to move blood from your body to the dialysis machine and then back to your body. This is called an access. The access allows your blood to be cleaned and have extra water removed. A central venous catheter stays in place until a permanent access can be made.

A central venous catheter is also called a CVC or tunnelled catheter. There are many brand names and the health care team may use the brand name when they talk to you.

**Here is a picture of what one type looks like. Your catheter may look different or be in a different place.**



### How is the catheter put in?

You will have local anesthetic put in your skin to freeze or numb the area. You may have a small amount of medication to relax you before the doctor begins.

When the area is numb, the doctor makes an incision and puts the catheter in your chest below your collarbone. You may feel some pressure while this is being done. The doctor will tell you what he or she is doing.

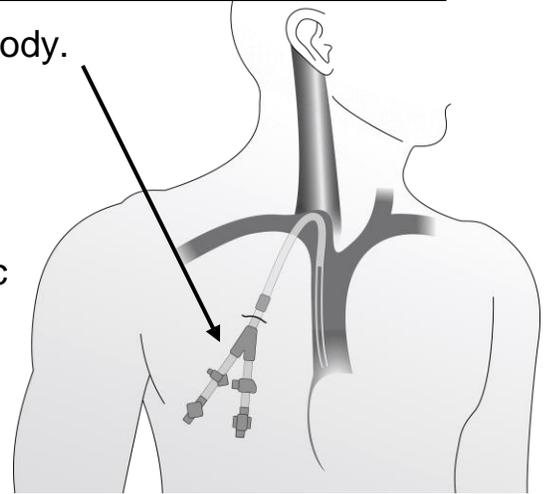
The long end is put into the vein which flows to your heart.

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The **Y** part of the tube stays outside your body. Each end is about 10 cm or 4 inches long. Each part of the **Y** tube has a clamp. The clamps are opened and closed for hemodialysis treatments.

Each part of the **Y** tube has a sterile plastic cap on the end. These caps protect the catheter between uses. You do not remove the caps or open the clamps between treatments.



### **How is the catheter held in place?**

There is a small cuff on the catheter under your skin. The cuff holds the catheter in place. It also helps prevent infection. Your skin will heal around the cuff. A light dressing covers the incision.

If you see that the cuff is moving or the catheter seems to be shifting, talk to your nurse or doctor the next time you come for treatment.

The small incision on your skin may have stitches that dissolve on their own in 1 to 2 months. These do not have to be removed.

If you have stitches that need to be removed in the neck area, these are taken out in 10 to 14 days.

If you have stitches where the catheter wing is anchored to the skin, these are taken out in 4 to 6 weeks.

### **Will I have pain or discomfort?**

At first, you may have some pain or discomfort in your shoulder muscle. Your doctor can give you medication to help. You should have less pain each day. Call your doctor if the pain does not go away.



### What activities can I do?

You may do most of your usual activities. You should avoid contact sports and any activity that may pull, tug or dislodge your catheter.

**You cannot have showers, swim or do any activity that may get the dressing wet.** You may have a bath but you must keep your dressing dry.

Wear loose fitting clothes to prevent rubbing and make it easier to use or check your catheter each time you have a treatment. When you come for a dialysis treatment, wear a button or snap shirt that opens in the front so your nurse can get to the Central Venous Catheter easily.

### How do I care for my catheter?

It is important that the dressing stays in place on your skin.

The dressing is changed every week by your dialysis nurse or when it peels off. The old dressing is gently peeled away.

Your nurse checks for soreness or drainage. A cotton swab may be rolled over the catheter exit site. This swab is sent to the lab to check for infection. The skin around the catheter is cleaned and a new dressing put on.

### What should I watch for?

You should check your catheter twice a day. You can look at the dressing. Check for signs of infection such as:

- red skin, drainage or swelling
- feeling sore at the exit site or over the catheter tunnel
- fever

If you have any of these signs, call your doctor or dialysis care team right away. Infection can be treated with antibiotic medication.



### What should I watch for?

- If the dressing peels or comes off, call the dialysis care team right away.
- The catheter clamps should always be closed when the catheter is not being used.
- If you see that the cuff is moving or the catheter seems to be shifting, talk to your nurse or doctor the next time you come for treatment.
- If your catheter comes out by accident, apply firm pressure to the exit site with dry gauze for at least 5 minutes to stop any bleeding. After the bleeding has stopped, call the Hemodialysis Unit or Centre and tell a nurse that your catheter has come out. **If you are not able to stop the bleeding, go to the nearest Emergency Department.** You should have a package of gauze and paper tape at home for emergency use.
- If you see that your catheter tubing has a hole and is leaking blood, use the catheter clamp right away to clamp the tubing as close to your body as you can. If you do not have a clamp, pinch the tubing with your fingers. This will stop air from getting into the tube. **Call the Hemodialysis Unit or Centre and go to the nearest Emergency Department.**



### Where can I get help?

When you have questions or concerns, you can talk to your kidney doctor or a member of the vascular access team or call your dialysis unit.