



Northwest Renal Network

Helping Navigate Kidney Disease

Patient Bulletin



Our mission is to promote optimal dialysis and transplant care for kidney patients in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington

We Can Help With:

Care concerns

Patient rights

Transplant

Treatment options

Travel and dialysis

Questions about employment

Access to our library of resources

Why Do I Need to Let Staff See My Access?

Successful cannulation takes good assessment and needle insertion skills. Once needles are placed, **the vascular access needs to be monitored for the entire dialysis treatment.**

How does staff do that? Staff monitors the arterial and venous pressures on the dialysis machine, and instructs patients to let staff know of any tightness or pain at needle sites. The safest way to monitor is to **look** at the access every time staff documents vital signs, as well as when there is a machine alarm. To do this, **the access must always be visible.**

How can patients keep warm and keep their access visible?

- ☀ If you bring a blanket to keep warm, use a second, smaller blanket to cover the exposed part of the arm or leg above or below the access
- ☀ Wear mittens (not gloves)
- ☀ Hold a glove filled with warm water
- ☀ Do not use heating pads, due to decreased sensation – you may not be able to tell if the pad is too hot for your skin

While patient comfort is very important, safety should always override comfort. There are many documented reports of venous needles falling out – down into the chair or under it, while the patient is sleeping, covered with a blanket, and staff was not able to respond within 15 seconds. At pump speeds greater than 350 ml/minutes, the patient can lose a unit of blood in under a minute.

How can such events be avoided? Some suggestions for staff:

- ☀ Set tight alarms and respond quickly when they go off
- ☀ Proper taping and chevron placement will help to secure needles
- ☀ If the patient is allergic to tape or sweats too much for tape to stick, explore alternative ways to secure needles

With creativity and teamwork, patients can be comfortable and safe.

Go to <http://nwrnbulletins.wordpress.com/> and click “Follow” in the lower right corner to receive NWRN Blog alerts



Patient Toll-Free Number for Northwest Renal Network: **1.800.262.1514**
www.nwrenalnetwork.org

