“Ready, Set, Go” The Steps to Catheter Freedom
Weeks 5-6: Fistula Maturity Check

- Perform fistula maturity check at each treatment or when patient reports a change.
- Reinforce to patient the importance of daily fistula checks.
- Listen to the patient.

Look

Listen

Feel

Arm Elevation test (AVF Only)

Were there any abnormal findings during the fistula maturity check?

No

Document that there were no abnormal findings.

Yes

Document findings and refer to expert clinician.

Continued...
"Ready, Set, Go" The Steps to Catheter Freedom

Weeks 5-6: Fistula Maturity Check

**Look**

- The hand looks the same as it did before surgery.
- The skin over the fistula is uniform in appearance and looks like the skin around it.
- The arm is bruised and/or the hand is not the normal color.
- There is redness, swelling, or drainage.

**Listen**

- **Bruit:** Listen with a stethoscope over the anastomosis. This is where the artery is joined to the vein.
- The bruit is audible, and can be heard along the cannulation segment.
- The bruit sounds like a “whoosh,” or for some, like a drum beat.
- There is no sound, or the bruit is not as loud as the last time it was checked.
- Sound is different from what a normal bruit should sound like.

**Feel**

- You can feel the fistula and identify the cannulation segment.
- The cannulation segment is long enough to use two needles placed two inches apart.
- You cannot feel the fistula.
- You cannot feel the cannulation segment.

Continued...
Dialysis Professional

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Weeks 5-6: Fistula Maturity Check

Feel

Thrill: A vibration or buzz that can be felt most prominently over the anastomosis; it will diminish along the length of the fistula.

The thrill becomes stronger as the fistula matures.

You cannot feel the thrill or it is weaker than the last time it was checked.

Pulse: A slight beating that feels like a heartbeat. Fingers placed lightly on the fistula move slightly.

Pulsatile: The beat is stronger than a normal pulse. Fingers placed lightly on the fistula will rise and fall with each beat.

Arm Elevation

Lower Arm Fistula
The fistula outflow vein collapses when the arm is raised above the level of the heart.

Upper Arm Fistula
The fistula outflow vein does not collapse partially when the arm is raised above the level of the heart. It may feel “flabby” when palpated.

Lower Arm Fistula
The fistula outflow vein does not collapse after the arm is raised above the level of the heart. This may mean there is a problem allowing the blood to flow from the fistula.

Upper Arm Fistula
The fistula outflow vein does not collapse partially or become “flabby” after being raised above the level of the heart. This may mean there is a problem allowing the blood to flow from the fistula.

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