

Saving your child's veins

This leaflet aims to help you understand the importance of looking after your child's veins. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your kidney doctor or nurse.

What is a vein?

Veins are blood vessels which return blood back to your heart from your body. Samples of blood are taken from veins to carry out blood tests. To monitor your child's kidney function, blood may need to be taken each time they come to see their kidney doctor or nurse.

What happens to your child's veins when they have a blood test?

Every time blood is taken from a vein, it will cause some unavoidable damage to the vein walls. Veins are delicate and can become permanently damaged by repeated blood tests. This can cause the vein to become scarred and difficult to use. Sometimes this scarring means that we are unable to obtain blood from a particular vein.

Why is it important to save my child's veins?

Some patients with poor kidney function may need to start dialysis to help remove excess water and waste products from their blood. Your doctor or nurse will talk to you if it becomes likely your child may need dialysis and give you more information. One type of dialysis is called haemodialysis, and one way we perform this is by creating an arteriovenous fistula. We can only create arteriovenous fistulas in patients with healthy veins. It's important to start looking after your child's veins before kidney function declines. Your child may not need dialysis until adulthood, and by this time the veins may be irreversibly damaged from repeated blood tests.

What is an arteriovenous fistula?

An **arteriovenous fistula** (usually shortened to **AV fistula** or **fistula**) is a connection made by a surgeon between an artery (which carries blood away from the heart) and vein (which carries blood to the heart). This connection creates one large, strong blood vessel. A fistula is currently the best option for accessing the blood when haemodialysis is needed over a long period of time. An AV fistula is usually made in the arm, either at the elbow or near the wrist, which is why it's especially important to look after the veins in the arm.

How can I protect my child's veins?

If your child needs blood taken or a cannula for intravenous access to receive medications or fluids, ask the person doing this to use the veins in the back of the hand, not the arm.

Remind them **not** to use the veins near the elbow as they will not always be aware your child is a kidney patient. If you're unsure which veins should be used, ask your doctor or nurse. Ask your child to wear the "**Save my veins**" **wristband** to alert health care professionals that your child's arm veins need preserving. If you don't have one, please ask your doctor or nurse to obtain one from the paediatric vascular access team.

Contact us

Paediatric Nephrology, Evelina London Children's Hospital
Dialysis Unit, **t:** 0207 188 4526 (Monday to Saturday, 9am-5pm)
Beach Ward, **t:** 0207 188 8844 (open 24 hours, seven days a week)
Third Floor, Evelina London, Westminster Bridge Road, Lambeth, London SE1 7EH

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

infoKID

This website gives information for parents and carers about kidney conditions.

w: www.infokid.org.uk

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

t: 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm **e:** letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111 **w:** 111.nhs.uk

NHS website

Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing.

w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

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